

INSPECTION REPORT

LISKEARD SCHOOL and COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Liskeard

LEA area: Cornwall

Unique reference number: 112061

Headteacher: Mr A Sedgley

Reporting inspector: W J Powell
3174

Dates of inspection: 12 - 16 November 2001

Inspection number: 188431

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Luxstowe Liskeard Cornwall
Postcode:	PL14 3EA
Telephone number:	01579 342344
Fax number:	01579 343350
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs O Loewendahl
Date of previous inspection:	20 - 24 May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3174	J Powell	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology (16-19)	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils or students taught?
11575	C Fish	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English 11-19 English as an additional language	
27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-19 Equality of opportunity	
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science 11-16 Chemistry 16-19 Physics 16-19	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
8336	T Davies	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-19	
31441	M King	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-16	
12867	A Looney	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages 11-16 French 16-19	
30982	B Barnes	Team inspector	History 11-16	
10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Religious education History 16-19	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography 11-16 Business studies 16-19	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design 11-19	
31660	M Young	Team inspector	Music 11-19	
20395	C Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education 11-19	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs Leisure and tourism 16-19	

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA Limited
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
DT2 9PU

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect the standards that they reach in relation to their earlier performances, and thus whether the **progress** that has occurred is high enough for the pupils concerned. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is located in Liskeard, a small town in East Cornwall. With 1330 boys and girls aged 11 to 18 on roll, it is a larger than average comprehensive school, and serves both the town of Liskeard and the surrounding rural area. Pupils come from 17 different primary schools; over half of the pupils use school transport each day. The standards at entry are slightly below average overall; literacy skills are significantly below average. Although the school draws pupils from across the full range of attainments, there are fewer than usual at the highest levels because of the presence of grammar schools in Plymouth. Almost one-third of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, of whom 54 have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. These are above average figures. Only eight pupils at the school come from ethnic minority backgrounds, there are no traveller children, and no full-time pupil has English as an additional language. However, the school hosts one-term visits to the sixth form by students from other EC countries; their English skills are good. The socio-economic character of the catchment is broadly average overall, although there are variations from area to area. The school has not had major problems in filling teaching posts, although it is proving difficult to find a permanent special educational needs co-ordinator.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Overall, this is a good school. Pupils who entered the school with slightly below average standards overall gain above average standards by the end of Year 11. Teaching is good overall at each main stage of education. The school is well led; much has been accomplished since the last inspection. Overall, the school gives good value for money, both in the main school and the sixth form.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well, gaining better overall results by Years 9 and 11 than would be expected from standards at entry.
- Teaching and learning are good overall; a strength is the subject expertise of the staff.
- The pupils' personal development is good; social and cultural development are particular strengths.
- The school makes very good use of target setting for pupils in order to raise standards.
- The headteacher has provided very good leadership since his arrival, and the governors have played an excellent part in setting priorities and evaluating the school's work..
- Sixth formers of all attainment levels get results that reflect their earlier attainments because there is a good sixth form curriculum which is well taught.

What could be improved

- Standards and achievement in information and communication technology should be higher in Years 7 to 11.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 has shortcomings in the balance of time between subjects.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs could be managed better.
- Provision for lower attaining sixth formers could be improved in design and technology and in key skills work in information and communication technology.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996. Since then, improvement has been good in the main school and sixth form. Standards have risen; the school has developed a far more evaluative culture. Results in core subject tests and in examinations have improved and are above average overall; achievement is good and the school exceeded its targets in 2001. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. There has been significant progress with most of the key issues raised in 1996; substantial changes to the curriculum were delayed to coincide with the completion of a major Private Finance Initiative building project that has finally brought the school onto one site. This project has consumed much management time. A very good system of target setting for pupils has allowed the school to monitor more closely its

effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, as well as the progress of individuals; whole-school targets for the future are realistically demanding.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the overall picture in recent years has been of overall results at or above the national average in mathematics and science, but below average in English. In 2001, improvements in the results of boys has raised English results to average levels in terms of all schools nationally and those having a similar level of free school meals; mathematics and science results are above the all-schools averages, and well above those for similar schools. Overall, achievement is good; pupils gained better results in mathematics than would have been expected from their test scores at entry in 1998; those in English and science were broadly as expected.

At the end of Year 11, the overall results in the 2001 examinations have followed the pattern of recent years by being above average in relation to all schools nationally; they are now well above those of similar schools. Achievement in 2001 was good; the overall results were higher than would be expected from the pupils' national test scores in 1999 and those at entry. In particular, lower attainers at the school have performed much better than their peers nationally in the 2001 examinations. Overall, girls have again gained better results than boys. When the pattern of individual pupils' results in 2001 are examined in more detail, they tended to do better in resistant materials and textiles aspects of design and technology, mathematics, science, French and German than in the other subjects that they took. Boys and girls tended to do less well in electronics, English language, and media studies.

Although no national data are yet available for sixth form examinations, the 2001 results are similar to the broadly average pattern of recent years. Overall, sixth formers of all attainment levels, male and female students alike, show satisfactory achievement over time; their results are in line with those expected from their earlier GCSE performances across a wide range of courses.

At all levels, the examination results of the small number of pupils and students from minority groups are comparable to those of their peers. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve at satisfactory levels.

In work seen during the inspection of the main school, achievement is good across Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average at the ends of Years 9 and 11 in mathematics, by the end of Year 9 in science and religious education, and by the end of Year 11 in design and technology and physical education. Standards are below average, with unsatisfactory achievement, in information and communication technology in Years 7 to 11, and in religious education in Years 10 and 11. In both cases, these results reflect curricular shortcomings. In all other subjects, standards are average and achievement at least satisfactory in relation to attainments at entry. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall, as are those of numeracy, although mental arithmetic skills could be better developed. At all levels, the few pupils from ethnic minority groups show achievement over time that is in line with those of their colleagues. The school met its targets in 2001 and has set itself appropriately demanding ones for future years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are positive about their work, although a few younger pupils, mainly lower attaining boys, are less so.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils have a good knowledge of their personal development. Relationships are good.
Attendance	Good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory in Year 8 and good in all other years. It is good at all levels in English, mathematics and science. The best teaching is seen in physical education in Years 10 and 11; that in Year 7 information and communication technology is unsatisfactory because of inadequate challenge. Teaching in music is satisfactory overall, but could be better organised, particularly in Years 7 to 9. All other subjects show good teaching overall. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. A major strength of teaching lies in the subject expertise of the staff. In a few cases, teachers do not demand enough of pupils. Teachers are good at meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Overall, learning is good; most pupils are hard working. Pupils have a good knowledge of how well they learn through the detailed target setting system.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11. Statutory requirements are not met for information and communication technology in Years 7 to 11, and in religious education in Years 10 and 11. There is also imbalance in the time allocations for subjects. However, the sixth form curriculum is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Individual education plans could be better.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Work in spiritual and moral development is good; that in social and cultural development is very good. Multi-cultural and multi-faith issues are given proper prominence.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The quality of assessment has been improved greatly since 1996, and target setting is well used to raise standards.

The findings of a major curriculum review are to be implemented in September 2002, when the final new buildings become available. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher has provided very good educational direction; middle management is good overall, but could be better in music and in special needs. Sixth form leadership is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have played an excellent part in planning the school's development in recent years, and in evaluating its performance. However, statutory requirements are not fully met in information and communication technology and in religious education.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Regular formal reviews of subjects help to identify priorities for development. Middle managers could review the work of their teams more closely.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school targets funds well to educational priority areas. It gives good value for money overall, and has a good awareness of the principle of best value.

Staffing is good. Overall, accommodation is good; the new buildings offer excellent facilities. The final phase of new building will be completed in 2002. Learning resources are satisfactory overall; better library facilities are planned for the near future.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations. • The approachability of the staff. • The fact that most children enjoy coming to school. • Pupils make good progress. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents would like better information about the progress of their children. • Homework arrangements could be improved. • The school could work more closely with parents.

Inspectors agree with the positive views above. They judge that the information on progress provided in reports is now good, based as it is on clear target setting procedures. The school is judged to make good efforts to work with parents. Homework is satisfactory overall, but improvements are possible.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 263 male and female students, this is a larger than average sixth form. After several years of steady growth, numbers have recently fallen slightly, reflecting a drop in the numbers of young people in the area. Since there are several other sixth forms and colleges offering mainly vocational courses within travelling distance of Liskeard, the sixth form focuses on AS and A-level provision; this is supplemented by a limited range of Intermediate GNVQ, AVCE and NVQ courses. About four-fifths of the pupils in Year 11 continue in education; about half of the boys and girls in the year group transfer to the Liskeard sixth form. In addition, some 30 to 40 students each year come from other schools in the surrounding area. The attainments of students on entry are average; the standard entry requirements are five GCSE passes at grade C or above, but students sometimes enter with lower attainments. There are two students from ethnic minorities, reflecting the composition of the local area and the main school. A small number of students has special educational needs. The school is undergoing substantial rebuilding, which will include improved facilities for sixth form work.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall, the effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It draws students from a wide range of prior attainments, offers them appropriately challenging and good teaching, and gains results that show at least satisfactory achievement for male and female students alike. Results have risen in line with national patterns in recent years. Learning is good, and is helped by the students' very positive attitudes to work. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good; there is a good culture of self-evaluation and the school is committed to meeting the needs of all its students who have the potential to benefit from its work. Overall, cost effectiveness is good.

Strengths

- Overall, students of all levels of prior attainment, male and female, show at least satisfactory achievement in relation to earlier attainments.
- The curriculum offered is a good one, with a wide range of opportunities that meet the students' needs well.
- Good use is made of analyses of results to monitor and improve provision; annual reports are very good.
- Students receive very good support and guidance on course choice, careers and higher education plans.
- Teaching is good; a significant proportion is very good or excellent.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies.

What could be improved

- Lower attainers in design and technology, and in key skills work in information and communication technology, need more teaching to build basic skills.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Male and female students show satisfactory achievement in relation to their earlier GCSE results. Teaching is good, with particularly strong subject knowledge.
Chemistry	Very good. Examination results are well above average, and coursework is of high quality. Teaching is good from subject specialists.
Physics	Very good. Examination results are above average and show good achievement. Good teaching makes students think about their work.
Design and technology	Unsatisfactory. Examination results are below average. Whilst higher attainers achieve appropriately, lower attainers do less well than expected because of poor organisation. Teaching, although satisfactory, needs to focus more on lower attainers. Recent problems with the management of the subject have now been resolved.
Business studies	Good. Examination results have improved in recent years and are now average. Students achieve satisfactorily. Teaching is satisfactory but could sometimes be more demanding. Assessment is good.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Examination results are average and reflect satisfactory achievement. Teaching is good overall, and draws on very good on-line materials produced by the school. Lower attainers need more teaching of basics in key skills work.
Physical education	Good. Examination results are below average but achievement is satisfactory. Standards in competitive sport are impressive. Teaching is good; teachers are very good role models.
Leisure and tourism / recreation	Very good. The GNVQ results are average, but achievement is good. Teaching is very good, with very good subject knowledge and planning.
Art and design	Very good. Examination results are above average for GNVQ, with good achievement, and average in A-level. Painting and drawing are strong. Teaching from practising artists is consistently good.
Music	Good. The first small group to take AS has shown satisfactory achievement. Performing skills could be better. Teaching is good, and involves good demonstrations.
History	Very good. Examination results are well above average and show good achievement. This reflects the students' positive attitudes and very good teaching.
English	Good. Examination results are above average and students achieve better results than expected from GCSE. Teaching is good, making demands on students.
French	Good. Examination results are average, showing good achievement. Teaching is good, and reflects the teachers' good linguistic and cultural knowledge.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was always at least satisfactory, but that in psychology was particularly challenging.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Staff know the students well, and encourage academic independence. Reports are very good. There is very good advice on careers and higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, as seen in the good range of courses offered and the students' achievements. The school monitors results closely in terms of the students' prior attainments in order to maintain quality. New courses have been introduced in a very good manner

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accessibility of teachers and the help that they give with work. • The wide choice of courses available. • The overall quality and challenge of the teaching. • The encouragement given to develop independence in learning. • The help given to settle students into the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of guidance on the choice of courses, and what they should do after they leave school. • The information provided on the progress that students are making. • The amount of support and help with personal problems. • The way in which work is assessed.

Inspectors agree with the positive things that the students have identified. However, the team disagrees with the negative comments about the quality of advice, guidance, information and assessment, all of which are judged to be at least satisfactory. This follows further discussions with students and staff, examination of records and other documentation, and observation of resources available.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, standards are slightly below average overall, but significantly so in terms of literacy for boys and girls alike. There are rather fewer higher attaining pupils than usual because many such pupils attend selective schools in Plymouth, which is within easy travelling distance of the Liskeard area.

2. By the end of Year 9, pupils progress well in response to good teaching, reaching above average standards overall in the 2001 national tests. Results in English were average in relation to all schools nationally, and to those having a similar level of pupils eligible for free school meals. Mathematics and science had above average results nationally, but well above average in relation to similar schools. Overall, in 2001, the pupils showed generally good achievement in relation to their test scores three years earlier, with mathematics results better than expected, and English and science broadly in line with expectations. In previous years, the picture has been of English results being markedly below average, mainly because of under-performance by middle attaining boys; this has been reduced by different teaching approaches. Standards in mathematics and science have been average in the past three years. In recent years, girls and boys have had similar results in mathematics and science, but girls did better than boys in English, although the gap between them narrowed in 2001.

3. By the end of Year 11, the school's GCSE results in recent years have been above both national figures and those of similar schools. In 2001, the mean points score obtained by pupils was above the national average but well above that of similar schools. However, the relatively skewed nature of the school's intake is still to be seen. Thus whilst the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grade C or better in 2001 was in line with the national average and above that for similar schools, that for five or more passes at G or above was well above both the national average and that for similar schools. In relation to the pupils' performances in national tests in 1999, the 2001 examination results represent good achievement by higher attainers, and very good achievement by middle and lower attaining pupils. Overall, girls outperform boys, although this is not the case in all subjects. Girls do, however, show consistently good achievement across the attainment range. Higher and lower attaining boys show more consistently good achievement than middle attainers, some of whom show significant underachievement.

4. In work seen, achievement is good overall between Years 7 and 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. English results in 2001 were below both the national average and that for similar schools; the changes in teaching that raised the Year 9 test results have yet to work through to older pupils. Mathematics and science results were in line with the national averages, but whilst science was in line with the average for similar schools, mathematics is above. In other subjects, results at grade C or better in 2001 were significantly above average in design and technology, German and Spanish. They were below average in drama, French, history, geography and music. More detailed analysis of individuals' results show that boys and girls tended to gain significantly higher grades in design and technology and in German than in the other subjects that they took. Boys also tended to do better in mathematics, science and Spanish, whilst girls did better in dance, French and child development. Boys and girls alike tended to underperform in electronics, English language and media studies. Girls' results were also significantly below their other subjects in art and design and in geography; boys showed relative underperformance in music.

5. In work seen during the inspection, standards in English are average by the end of Years 9 and 11, representing good achievement overall. Standards are higher in Years 10 and 11

than recent examination results would suggest because improvements in earlier years are now starting to become evident as pupils reach GCSE work. More importantly, teaching is now concentrating far more on sharpening the skills needed in examination work. The development of literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, and a good start has been made to the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Writing skills are now being developed successfully in most subjects, for example through extended writing or the use of key words. Whilst reading skills are developed satisfactorily across most subjects, few teachers yet encourage the use of a suitable range of reading techniques.

6. Standards seen in mathematics are above average at the ends of Years 9 and 11, representing good achievement in both cases. Standards in Year 11 are better than recent GCSE results because of greater focus on examination work in teaching. One relative area of weakness lies in the pupils' ability to use and apply mathematics. Overall, mental skills are not developed sufficiently, and some pupils still resort to calculators for simple arithmetic. Although there is, as yet, no policy to develop numeracy across the curriculum, many subjects show that pupils have a satisfactory ability to use mathematics to support their work.

7. The standards of work seen in science are above average in Years 7 to 9, and average in Years 10 and 11. Overall, achievement is satisfactory across the pupils' time at the school, although better in the earlier years. Investigative skills have improved since the last inspection, so that pupils show similar standards in all aspects of the subject.

8. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 show below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement in information and communication technology, although standards on the specialist GNVQ Part One course in Years 10 and 11 are average, and the pupils concerned show good achievement. Pupils receive a very limited amount of specialist teaching in the subject during Year 7. In theory, they then develop their skills by using computers to support their work across the rest of the curriculum in all years. In practice, this does not happen, and with the exception of design and technology, subjects do not provide planned progress in information and communication technology. As pupils arrive from primary schools with ever-higher skills, standards are falling further behind expected levels, even in the small number of specialist lessons in Year 7.

9. In religious education, standards are above average and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. However, in Years 10 and 11, insufficient time means that in spite of very good teaching, pupils cannot achieve sufficiently, and standards are therefore below average.

10. In all other subjects, standards are at least average and pupils show at least satisfactory achievement in their work over time. Achievement is notably good in art and design in all years, particularly in the development of drawing and painting skills, and in physical education in Years 10 and 11.

11. Gifted pupils, and those with special educational needs, show at least satisfactory achievement in all years, reaching appropriately high standards. Where achievement is better than satisfactory, key features are the use of appropriate teaching styles within the classroom that provide properly for the needs of individuals, and match work to these. Achievement is also good where pupils with special educational needs receive assistance from learning support staff; there are too few of these to support the work of all those on the school's special needs register. There are very few pupils from minority groups, but the school monitors their performances and can demonstrate that they show similar achievement to their peers.

Sixth form

12. Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of standards. Although the basic entry requirement is five GCSE passes at C or better, the school takes a flexible approach based on its knowledge of each individual and their educational and career aspirations. Some students therefore enter with results below the normal minimum. Students who join the school from others in the area tend to have markedly higher results than the minimum requirements. Overall, however, the standards at entry are broadly average. Students tend to remain on courses; last year, 89 per cent of students who started courses in the sixth form completed them.

13. The school's results at the end of courses vary from year to year, reflecting their different intake characters, but have been broadly average in recent years. In 2000, the last year for which national comparative data are available, results were above average in GNVQ art, and in A-level chemistry, English literature, geography, history and physics. They were below average in A-level biology, design and technology, general studies, German, mathematics and physical education. In all other subjects, results were broadly average, although the small numbers on many courses make comparisons with national figures unreliable.

14. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. When individual students' 2001 A-level and AVCE results are compared against their earlier GCSE scores, they tend to gain slightly better results in the sixth form than would be expected. Amongst higher attainers, male students tend to do better in relation to GCSE scores than females. Many of the higher attainers joined the school at the start of Year 12. Males and females achieve at similar rates amongst middle attaining students. Amongst lower attainers, both male and female students show good achievement overall; this vindicates the school's flexible entry policy. Some of the highest gains between GCSE and the end of Year 13 are seen amongst the lowest attaining male students, and amongst students following the recently introduced AVCE courses. There are very few students from minority groups, but their achievements are similar to those of other students. Students with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily thanks to the support that they receive.

15. Work seen during the inspection focused on 13 of the subjects offered. Standards observed mirror examination results, except that students following the new AVCE in leisure and recreation, and A-level students of history, demonstrate well above average standards, and show very good achievement. Only design and technology shows current work to be markedly below average standards and to represent unsatisfactory achievement overall. Here, although higher attainers of both sexes make good progress, lower attaining male students underachieve because of limited basic skills and organisation. Achievement in relation to prior attainment is good in art, business studies, chemistry, English, music and physics. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education and French.

16. In key skills, standards in communication are average; after a slow start, the requirements of the new courses are much better this year. Portfolios show a suitably wide range of work, including examples from other subjects. Standards in application of number are below average, reflecting the limited teaching time available, timetable clashes and low motivation amongst students. Information and communication technology shows Level 3 students to be performing at average standards, showing satisfactory achievement. In contrast, lower attainers following the Level 2 course show below average standards and achievement. Some have only embryonic skills when working with computers, and the small amount of specialist teaching is insufficient to have any real impact. Others question the need for key skills, attend sporadically, and show low motivation.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The positive picture of the pupils' attitudes, values and personal development has been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils' attitudes in lessons improve as they move through the school. Half of lessons in Years 7 to 9 show attitudes that are good or better; in Years 10 and 11, the proportion rises to two-thirds. There is only a small number of lessons in which pupils' attitudes slip and these generally reflect the quality of teaching. In Years 7 and 8, unsatisfactory lessons tend to reflect low-level misbehaviour. In Years 9 to 11, it tends to be loss of attention because of a lack of challenge.

18. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to their work are good. Parents report that pupils enjoy coming to school. The overwhelmingly positive attitudes have a beneficial effect on the pupils' learning. In lessons where attitudes are very good or excellent, these are characterised by high levels of interest in the topic, and often reflect situations where the pupils have been given some choice in what they are doing. The pupils in such lessons are confident to ask and answer questions, set to work quickly and learn at a very good pace. For example, in a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson after school, pupils were so eager to get on that they entered the room quickly, started work and made rapid progress. These pupils cover this work in their own time because they want to do the subject in addition to their chosen options. In a Year 9 geography lesson, the high quality of discussion and concentration led to good achievement in work on river flooding in Bangladesh. In a few lessons, the pupils' attitudes are good in spite of shortcomings in the teaching. There is a small number of lessons in which a minority of pupils, generally lower attainers in Year 11, are negative about work and are slow to organise themselves. In general, this is linked to shortcomings in the teaching; work is not well matched to the pupils' needs and interests. Occasionally, however, one or two individuals seek to undermine learning in spite of the teacher's best efforts.

19. Behaviour is good overall. Pupils move around the school in a generally orderly fashion, despite bottlenecks in corridors and on stairways. Behaviour is also good outside the buildings at breaks and at lunchtime. Behaviour in lessons is also good overall. For the most part, pupils with special educational needs behave well. Where there is unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons in Years 7 and 8, it is often because the teacher is not confident in applying the school's positive behaviour strategies. The most common problem is a failure to curb excessive calling out or noise levels. Pupils said that whilst bullying does sometimes occur, they are confident in the school's ability to tackle it. There is no evidence that the few pupils from minority backgrounds are treated differently to other pupils. The number of fixed term exclusions last year was relatively high, although most were of short duration. This reflects the strong stand the school takes over any form of abuse aimed at teachers. The ratio of boys to girls involved is in line with the national picture, as is the number of permanent exclusions. These are only made as a last resort. Governors are fully involved and the correct procedures are followed.

20. The personal development of the pupils is good. They take responsibility from the time they start at the school by undertaking jobs such as collecting and delivering registers, helping their tutor in the classroom and giving out and collecting in books. Opportunities exist for pupils to be school council representatives, to be involved in school productions and events, take part in sports teams and to show visitors around the school. Pupils take part in charity fund-raising events, one of which coincided with the inspection. Pupils in Year 10 act as mentors for pupils new to Year 7, to their mutual benefit. Pupils are encouraged to identify with the school and their year and tutor groups, for example through matches or outings. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own personal and academic development. During the new-style Year 8 academic guidance day, parents were pleased with the way that their children discussed their learning with tutors.

21. Relationships throughout the school are good overall. Most pupils get on well with each other and with the adults in the school. Pupils of different attainment levels and backgrounds

work together well, often supporting each other productively. The good relationships that exist allow them to discuss potentially difficult matters, as in the discussion about attitudes to sex that took part in a Year10 lesson. Pupils are supportive to those with special educational needs, enabling such pupils to play a full part in lessons.

22. Attendance is good. The level of authorised absence is below average; that of unauthorised absence is average. Punctuality to school and to lessons is generally satisfactory, in spite of occasional problems with school transport. A few pupils show little urgency in getting to lessons around this large site, particularly after breaks.

Sixth form

23. The students' attitudes towards the school are very good. They have positive views about the school. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are always at least satisfactory; they are good or better in nine-tenths of lessons, and very good or excellent in half of them. There have been no exclusions from the sixth form. Students take a very positive approach to their work, often motivated by a particular goal in view. For example, students on the early years and child education and development course are all very smartly dressed when they need to be. In lessons, students concentrate very well, display a creditable determination to improve where this is needed and are keen, well organised and prepared to seek help when necessary.

24. Personal development in the sixth form is very good. Students are not only enthusiastically involved in their learning, but are also keen to be engaged in the life of the school. They willingly take on tasks that benefit the whole school. For example, students are asked to put themselves forward for selection as prefects. The efforts of those chosen are very much appreciated, especially by the midday supervisors. Students run the school's tuck shop and organise events such as the variety show planned for December. Students also run the school council. Being selected for this post involves pupils selling themselves to the selection team by writing a letter of introduction and asking to be considered. This is very good preparation for their applications for higher education or for job applications.

25. Students have very good relationships with fellow students, staff and the rest of the school. They work well together and support each other very well. For example, in a lesson on organising sports leagues and competitions, students discussed how they should tackle the task set, they recognised each other's strengths and weaknesses, and were able to work through the task and give a creditable presentation at the end of the lesson. Students appreciate the way that staff treat them as mature adults; they respond accordingly.

26. Attendance in the sixth form is good overall. Students want to gain the qualifications they need for the next step in their education or job and attend regularly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. Teaching in the main school is good overall, as is learning. Teaching and learning improve sharply from Year 9 onwards; little teaching at this level is unsatisfactory and some is excellent. Teaching and learning are also good in Year 7; although there is more unsatisfactory teaching than in later years, a substantial amount is also very good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 8. The relatively small number of unsatisfactory lessons occurs across a range of subjects, most often in Years 7 and 8; they are isolated events in a generally positive pattern within subjects. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, as has the proportion of very good or excellent work in the classroom. Almost all of the criticisms of teaching made in 1996 have been tackled successfully.

28. Teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science are good at all levels; in English and mathematics it is always satisfactory or better. Teaching and learning are very good in physical education. Here, teaching is particularly successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of pupils, and providing them with challenging tasks. Pupils enjoy the work and seek to do well.

29. In all other subjects except music, and in information and communication technology in Year 7, teaching and learning are good. Teaching in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory in Year 7 because the work is pitched at a level that falls well below the standards of the pupils now coming from primary schools. Pupils are given little scope to work outside a rigid framework of activities, causing middle and higher attainers to underachieve by a substantial margin as they wait for lower attainers to catch up. In music, teaching is satisfactory overall, although some is good. Some teaching in Years 7 to 9 takes place in double groups; this is not always successful in ensuring adequate progress. In addition, assessment could be improved.

30. The strongest feature of teaching is the very good subject knowledge of the staff. The match of qualifications to subjects taught is unusually high. The emerging practice of allocating learning support assistants to subjects is also building expertise. Pupils benefit from this expertise, gaining good knowledge and understanding of subjects. In contrast to the work seen in Year 7, teaching in specialist GNVQ information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 is very good, with well designed assignments promoting high achievement, well focused explanations setting pupils off in the right direction, and sharp questioning stretching everyone to the limit. An excellent dance lesson in Year 9 saw the teacher's high quality subject knowledge at work in highly effective demonstrations, precise use of technical terms, detailed evaluation and lively feedback. As a result, the boys and girls in the large class learned at a high rate, and acquired a good range of new skills, in spite of the crowded accommodation in use.

31. The planning of lessons is good overall. For the most part, time, support staff and learning resources are well used to support a good range of learning methods. As a result, the pace of learning is good, and interest is high. Exemplary planning and use of a range of methods were seen in a Year 7 food lesson. Here, the structure of the activities ensured that pupils of all abilities worked at a demanding pace, planning and predicting the nature of a cake in terms of colour, texture and taste. The teacher used a range of techniques, all carefully timed, to maintain interest. There was excellent and entirely appropriate use of information and communication technology saw pupils working on a nutrition program to analyse cake recipes. Overall, the pupils made very good progress indeed. A Year 9 geography lesson made very good use of resources to develop the pupils' understanding of pressure waves, drawing upon equipment such as a gong and a coil, plus a group demonstration. Although this took up a significant part of the lesson, it ensured that pupils were able to understand clearly the idea of waves in the Earth's crust. However, planning could be better in music, where schemes of work need updating.

32. For the most part, expectations of both behaviour and of work are good. The management of pupils' behaviour is also good in most classrooms, leading to a calm working environment for all pupils. However, a reluctance to challenge the minority of pupils, often lower attaining boys, who misbehave in lessons is a common thread in several of the cases of unsatisfactory teaching. It is also about ensuring that there is a quiet atmosphere in which pupils can listen; some teachers tolerate too high an ambient noise level, which erodes concentration. A Year 9 French lesson got things right. The teacher's management of pupils was very good; she ensured that sanctions were consistent, and that a few pupils did not derail the planned lesson with needless comment. Yet this was done in a positive manner, with good use of praise. As a result, the pupils concerned made very good gains in basic linguistic skills. A lack of suitably challenging work is the other major cause of unsatisfactory

teaching. There were many examples of demanding work being set, work that made pupils think for themselves, and stimulating independence in learning. But in a few lessons, work is not well matched to the pupils' needs, being either too demanding or, more commonly, too easy. For example, a Year 11 science lesson involved filling gaps in an exercise written on the board; with the teacher's back thus turned, the pupils took the chance to continue with their own conversations. Homework arrangements are satisfactory overall, although in some cases, it too lacks challenge, particularly for higher attainers.

33. Expectations are being raised by the good use of target setting based on the pupils' prior attainments. This, together with improvements in marking, represents a major improvement since the last inspection. The quality and use of assessment are now good. The target setting scheme means that pupils have a very clear idea of the impact of their learning. Only in music was this not well established and used to good effect.

34. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Work on literacy is starting to draw upon the lead provided by the English department; the use of key words, and a wider range of writing, is developing in most subjects. Reading is not always used effectively, however. The lack of a clear policy on numeracy means that opportunities are not always being taken in lessons to develop these skills. Whilst most teachers now have basic competence in using information and communication technology to support learning, the work done tends to repeat relatively modest skills from subject to subject rather than raising standards of computer use.

35. In most lessons, teachers are good at meeting the needs of all pupils, including gifted pupils and those from minority backgrounds. Once again, the target setting system is effective in identifying which pupils need more help to reach their goals. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, and ensures that the pupils learn effectively. Some teachers plan well to meet the needs of special educational needs pupils within mainstream lessons, although individuals' education plans could give teachers clearer targets. When pupils with special educational needs are supported in lessons, assistance is well focused and teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' progress. A good example occurred in a music lesson, where the learning support assistant's musical knowledge was a key factor in the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Teaching in withdrawal sessions is also satisfactory, and work is generally carefully targeted to the needs of individual pupils.

Sixth form

36. Teaching in the sixth form is good, and leads to good learning, including the development of independence, among the students. All teaching is at least satisfactory and one-third is very good or excellent. Teaching and learning are very good in leisure and recreation / tourism lessons, and also in art, chemistry, physics and history. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in business studies and in design and technology. In all other subjects, teaching and learning are good. The strengths of the teaching lead to students making very good progress in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. They work very hard, and show very good concentration on the tasks set.

37. The various strengths of teaching in the main school apply equally in the sixth form. In particular, the very good subject knowledge of teachers creates a positive and demanding learning atmosphere. A good example occurred in a Year 13 music harmony lesson, where the teacher's strong subject knowledge underpinned incisive question and answer work and developed the students' understanding in individual work at the keyboard, backed by very clear explanations and demonstrations. The lesson had a strong evaluative component that ensured that students used aural work to enhance their writing. The development of

appropriately high standards of analysis and evaluation is a feature of work in all subjects, aided by the teachers' own confidence with the concepts being taught.

38. The planning and methods used by teachers are good in the sixth form. An excellent Year 12 history lesson on essay planning set high standards, building upon good classroom relationships to draw out key features of work done in groups by the students. As a result, students grew in confidence, and became more confident in working with the challenging materials provided. The mix of small group and whole class work was highly effective, and taken with the department's lead teacher / review teacher, ensured that there was sufficient time to build skills. At this early stage of the course, the students are already thinking analytically. High expectations and a good range of learning styles also lay at the core of a Year 12 further mathematics lesson. The lesson began promptly with a sharp warm-up test, which focused the students' thinking well.

39. Assessment is a strength of sixth form work. The use of target setting helps teachers to plan work so that it meets the needs of all students, including the small number with special educational needs and those from minority backgrounds. Clear marking, based on target grades, shows students what needs to be done in order to improve work. Some marking, for example of vocational portfolios, is particularly detailed. Furthermore, students are able to assess their own and each other's work, making constructive suggestions. Because teaching promotes independent thought, students are also able to work independently, both in and out of lessons. Independent research and investigation is developing well, with students recognising the importance of this aspect of their work.

40. The teaching of key skills in the sixth form is tackled purposefully, although teachers were hampered in 2000-2001 by a lack of guidance from examination bodies, and the time available for specialist sessions is inadequate. Students are markedly less positive about this aspect of their work than that in their main subjects. Some question the purpose of key skills work, since it is not a requirement for their higher education courses. Teaching in communications sessions is good, and students take the work seriously, drawing links to their other subjects. Students benefit from good and accurate assessment. In information and communication technology, teaching is satisfactory, but the infrequent lessons, combined with the very wide range of the students' previous expertise, poses substantial problems, particularly for Level 2 candidates. Here, there is too little time to give students the basic instruction that they require. Across the curriculum as a whole, however, teachers have appropriate skills when working with computers, but as in Years 7 to 11, little of the work deepens the students' competence in this area. Teachers also make satisfactory provision for application of number in their own subjects, although the lack of a clear numeracy policy means that work lacks co-ordination.

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

41. Overall, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not fully met in Years 7 to 11. In addition, there are weaknesses of subject balance that reflect the timetabling restrictions imposed by the former split-site nature of the school. Curriculum matters formed part of the key issues at the time of the last inspection. Whilst there has been progress in some areas, the governors decided to delay major curriculum changes until the school was on one site, and with sufficient space for its work. A major curriculum review is now under way, with plans to introduce a new curriculum structure to coincide with the completion of the final phase of new building work in September 2002. This review is including consideration of whether the school should seek specialist school status to enhance its provisions, including those within the wider community.

42. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, although the statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not met in full, leading to below average standards and achievement in the subject. Apart from limited specialist teaching in Year 7, the course is supposed to be delivered through work in other subjects. At present, these arrangements do not provide sufficiently certain opportunities for the proper development of skills in the different aspects of information and communication technology. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as religious education, personal and social education, and drama. Pupils are mostly taught in their mixed ability tutor groups in Year 7, with limited setting arrangements in mathematics and science. In design and technology, pupils are taught in smaller mixed ability groups. As pupils progress to Years 8 and 9, there is an increase in the number of subjects that group pupils by prior attainment, but the arrangements are not underpinned by a clear policy on grouping. In Years 8 and 9, all pupils study a second foreign language, the extra time required reducing that available for design and technology, art, music, and also for French. This makes delivery of these subjects more difficult. In spite of these inconsistencies in time allocations and grouping, the breadth and balance of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are broadly satisfactory overall.

43. The quality and range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory, since statutory requirements are not being fully met in information and communication technology and in religious education. Standards and achievement in both subjects are below average as a result. All subjects of the National Curriculum are provided although, as in Years 7 to 9, the delivery of information and communication technology through other subjects fails to ensure coverage in sufficient depth for most pupils. Inadequate time prevents full coverage of the agreed syllabus for religious education. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory overall. Most pupils follow a satisfactorily broad range of courses, including options. The high investment of time and staffing in two foreign languages in Years 8 and 9 is not reflected in increased take-up of a second language in Years 10 and 11. The high curriculum cost of the two languages policy is not reflected in balancing benefits. There continues to be inequality in the time allocated to option subjects, compounding the problems in Years 7 to 9 for art, music, and design and technology. Whilst a few pupils follow work related learning or a course leading to Initial Awards, there is relatively little opportunity for the study of vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11, in spite of the wide nature of the school's intake. Pupils in Year 10 do, however, have the opportunity to study courses in food preparation and cooking, and a Foundation award in caring for children. Correct procedures are followed for the small number of pupils disapplied from the National Curriculum.

44. All pupils have personal, social and health education as part of their curriculum. Provision for this is very good and fully reflects the ethos and values of the school. Drugs awareness and sex education are taught in a sensitive and informative manner. Some elements of citizenship are already incorporated into the programme. Schemes of work and other supporting documentation are thorough. Teaching is co-ordinated effectively by the head of department, who manages a team of nine specialist teachers who are committed to the subject. Provisions for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory overall, although the lack of a whole school policy in the latter means that opportunities are not always being identified or taken.

45. Provision for careers education in the main school is good. In Year 9 pupils are shown how to access the information about careers available in the library. They also have an interview with their head of year or a member of the senior management team about their choice of options for Years 10 and 11. In Year 11, interviews are arranged for all pupils with an outside careers specialist. Information and an open evening are provided about continuing education and job and careers opportunities. Suitable work experience opportunities are provided at the end of Year 10.

46. The schools' provision for equal opportunities is good. The school has a clear commitment to the concept and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. A brief policy document contains useful information and confirms the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for pupils and staff. Recent and future buildings are suitably designed for those with physical or visual impairments, including those in wheelchairs. The school's curricular and pastoral structures are designed to ensure equal opportunities, although the limited provision of vocational education in Year 10 and 11 is a shortcoming. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own cultural identity; opportunities to raise multicultural awareness are expressed through assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme, as well as in art, drama, dance and religious education. Overall, staff have a very good idea of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Teaching enables pupils with a range of needs to learn effectively. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are well supported.

47. The arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are broadly satisfactory. The school's curricular and pastoral structures are designed to ensure equality of opportunity. The curriculum is organised so that pupils build upon their prior performance. Literacy and numeracy recovery programmes are in place in Year 7 so that pupils can be helped to gain full access to the curriculum. Recent changes make the deployment of learning support assistants more effective. However, the special educational needs department has yet to recognise that the school's special needs register should be a flexible tool to support learning. Not all pupils on the register have individual education plans, and those that are in place are not always effective. Plans do not have appropriate targets; many are imprecise, pupils and staff are not always aware of them, and there is a need for greater involvement of pupils in target setting. Current education plans do not identify success criteria which are readily achievable, and which can be easily understood by pupils, parents and teachers. Nor are the plans reviewed at appropriate intervals. Gifted and talented pupils are not always sufficiently stretched in their work, although good provision exists in physical education, especially in Years 10 and 11

48. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities which is appreciated and well supported by pupils, in spite of the restrictions caused by school transport. There is a wide range of games and sporting activities; school teams and individual pupils enjoy a high level of success. There is an increasing range of outdoor education activities; the Year 7 expedition early in the school year is very successful in helping pupils to make friends and settle into their new school. The drama department offers pupils the opportunity to take part in a large number of school productions and workshops, and also arranges theatre visits. The range of activities in music, however, is rather limited for a school of this size. A number of departments offer study classes, either at lunchtime or after school, which are particularly helpful for revision as examinations approach.

49. The school has developed good links with the local community, which enhance the curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils throughout the school. Members of the local community visit the school and make good contributions to learning through school assemblies, the programme of personal, social and health education, and the curriculum in several subjects. There are good links with partner institutions, especially primary schools, where they are particularly effective in helping pupils during the transfer from primary to secondary school. Suitable curricular links are also established. Those for literacy have led to an energetic exchange of views on teaching methods that has contributed to raising standards in English in the recent past. There has also been joint training in areas of common interest. There are sound links with further and higher education institutions.

50. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an explicit and positive ethos in the school, which permeates the

lessons, relationships and the many activities that go on. The school has begun to explicitly plan for these aspects of pupils' development; this work needs to continue so that pupils' experiences can be more consistently and explicitly assured throughout all subjects of the curriculum and the life of the school generally.

51. The arrangements for spiritual development are good. The school does not meet fully the requirements for collective worship because of space limitations, but assemblies and tutorials are conducted regularly. Although there are good opportunities within assemblies to consider a range of moral and ethical issues, there is a need for a review of their contribution to the spiritual dimension. Spiritual development is positively fostered through some lessons and many activities. For example, the school observed a two-minute silence in honour of Remembrance Day. In religious education there is a strong emphasis on personal reflection and searching for meaning. In history, poems convey a deep understanding of the horrors and dilemmas of life in First World War trenches. Pupils in drama keep diaries, where they are encouraged to reflect on their work and their experiences. However, there are subject areas where opportunities to enable pupils to reflect or consider wider spiritual issues are missed: in music, for example, there is little attempt to teach pupils to reflect on or appreciate the power of music. Subjects could do more to review the spiritual dimension in their planning in order to ensure the consistency of pupils' experiences.

52. There is good provision for the pupils' moral development. Teachers and other adults continually reinforce basic moral principles throughout the daily life of the school. Adults provide good role models for pupils. They treat pupils with respect and kindness, discuss issues of right and wrong and try to explain why one course of action is better than another. Pupils who misbehave are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour in 'time out' sessions. In religious education, pupils are taught moral codes of several different faiths, while in history pupils consider a range of moral and ethical issues such as slavery or the Holocaust. Pupils are encouraged to maintain fair play when involved in sporting or other activities. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 assembly when pupils scripted a performance on the importance of fairness. Personal, social and health education makes a positive contribution towards this aspect of pupils' dimension through the consideration of a wide range of moral and ethical issues such as bullying, discrimination and sexual behaviour.

53. Provision for social development is very good. The school actively encourages pupils to take responsibility and develop an understanding of living in a community. Many lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work in teams, small groups or pairs. Respect and care for one another are well developed through the peer mentoring system. There is a lively school council, which considers issues that the pupils feel are important; its views are given serious consideration. Pupils are given many other opportunities to exercise responsibility. For example, Year 11 pupils organise their own dinner dance, whilst pupils in Year 10 are involved in drama performances for younger pupils on issues such as bullying. Opportunities for personal growth and social development are enhanced through the community sports leader award.

54. The provision for cultural development is very good. Pupils widen their horizons and experience, celebrate their own cultures, and are given very good opportunities to explore new ones. The school works effectively to ensure that pupils are prepared for life in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society and stresses the importance of equal and fair treatment for all. Literature, drama, religious education, history, art, geography and the personal, social and health education programme all explore issues relating to UK, Cornish, western and world cultures. In religious education, pupils gain insights into Islamic beliefs and values. There is a good display of Islamic patterns displayed in mathematics classrooms. The school has a valuable link with a school in Ghana. Art from a diversity of other cultures is included in the art curriculum and pupils have good opportunities for visiting galleries, using local artists in school and in developing a comprehension of art as a way of understanding the world. There

are regular opportunities to visit theatres, galleries and museums and for pupils to undertake residential trips abroad.

Sixth form

55. The curriculum in the sixth form is good; there is a good quality and range of subjects available at AS and A-level, supplemented by a good range of vocational opportunities, key skills provision, and extension studies. Statutory requirements are met. Provision has improved since the previous inspection. The courses offered provide a good match to the students' aspirations and local circumstances, and represent good breadth, balance and relevance.

56. The school has responded positively to the challenge of the new requirements in Curriculum 2000 by extending its provision in the sixth form. There is an increased opportunity to study four subjects in Year 12 in order to obtain at least an AS qualification. There are new AVCE courses in leisure and recreation, and in information and communication technology, and these are available as either three- or six-unit courses which adds to their attraction for students, as well as reflecting local needs and circumstances very well. Further vocational opportunities are offered in GNVQ Intermediate level courses in art and design, and in leisure and tourism, and through an NVQ in early years care and education. The school's provision for the needs of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, and there are good arrangements for equality of access and opportunity. Take up of courses is monitored in terms of the sex of pupils and their previous school history, whilst results are evaluated by sex, ethnicity and prior attainment. These analyses show that the school's provisions are successful in meeting the students' needs.

57. All students in the sixth form have satisfactory opportunities for personal, social and health education. The provision for this is improving, and reflects the ethos of the school and the needs of the students. Students are also required to take part in physical education, and an interesting range of extension studies. Lessons in key skills enable students to improve their computer skills, communication, and application of number, although the frequency of these sessions is inadequate to meet the needs of some lower attainers.

58. Careers advice is provided for students not going into higher education on an individual basis. Good support is provided by outside careers advisors. Students receive appropriate advice and guidance on the choice of higher or further education courses. Students have good access to relevant materials, including on-line resources.

59. Provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is good overall. Students undertake a course of religious education. There are regular opportunities within lessons for students to reflect on their own and other people's lives. The general studies course has frequently planned opportunities for discussion on social, moral and cultural issues. Students in the sixth form have increased opportunities for responsibility, and take leading roles in the life of the school by, for example, participation in the Millennium Volunteers scheme or the school council. They are encouraged to exercise their social skills by ensuring that the sixth form common room is kept clean and tidy. A student in Year 12 has recently visited a school in Ghana and was given the chance to share her knowledge by helping in Year 7 religious education lessons and by giving a sixth form assembly. There are suitable opportunities for students in Year 12 to participate in a *mini-assistant* scheme in France or to undertake work experience in Germany

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. The school creates a caring environment in which pupils feel safe and are encouraged to develop and mature. Welfare arrangements are good overall. The school has very good procedures for child protection, based clearly on the locally agreed policy and procedures. All staff know who they should report concerns to and they are vigilant in this area. The school enjoys good support from, and links with, various outside agencies. Health and safety arrangements are good. The school is fortunate in having a nurse on site every day. Any accidents or medical emergencies are well handled and all such events are properly recorded. At present, discussions are continuing as to where the balance of responsibility for the oversight of health and safety matters under the Private Finance Initiative partnership should lie.

61. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. The school's procedures contribute to the good achievement that pupils make over time. A recent senior appointment is providing good leadership in developing enhanced monitoring systems for younger pupils; these are evolving to encompass all years. A computerised record keeping system provides the required information for monitoring purposes. Regular liaison between subject and pastoral teams promotes good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils; plans to involve group tutors more closely are in hand. The school responded well to criticisms in the last inspection report about inconsistencies in its assessment arrangements. An appropriate policy is now in place which underpins many common approaches from Year 7 to 11. The headteacher, senior managers and the assessment co-ordinator oversee whole school practices through meetings, scrutiny of the teachers' marking in pupils' exercise books and annual subject reviews. Heads of department are responsible for promoting consistency within their subject. As head of mathematics, the assessment co-ordinator has a dual role. This necessarily imposes restrictions on the time available for whole school assessment matters.

62. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. They tend to be more comprehensive in Years 10 to 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Almost all subject departments adhere to the schools' three point scale for marking and grading the pupils' work; most set key assessment tasks or tests on a regular basis and upgrade records accordingly. Whilst good procedures exist in mathematics, media studies and modern foreign languages, assessment and marking are unsatisfactory in music. Most teachers provide pupils with satisfactory feedback by means of written or verbal comments. In several subjects, teachers share the National Curriculum or examination course assessment criteria with the pupils; they involve them in self-assessment which helps them to understand how to improve their work. Some good practices which exist in design technology and vocational courses could usefully guide developments in other subjects. To date, the compilation of departmental portfolios of pupils' work to exemplify National Curriculum standards is underdeveloped. As a result, the teachers' own assessment of the pupils' attainments at the end of Year 9 are inflated somewhat in history and geography. In 2001, the school failed to comply with the statutory requirement to assess and report on the attainment and progress of all its pupils in information and communication technology. The school recognised this, and plans to rectify the situation in 2002.

63. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. Some subjects, for example mathematics and science, have altered their schemes of work, or introduced different tasks for the higher and lower attaining pupils. Elsewhere, developments are more modest. However, the use of data analyses to monitor the work of subjects is very good, drawing well upon national value added information to identify whether particular groups of pupils underachieve or do particularly well.

64. The educational and personal support for pupils is good. Tutors and year heads know pupils and their families well. The recently introduced target setting system is providing a firmer basis for tutorial work. The schools' arrangements for identifying pupils with special

educational needs have proper regard to the procedures recommended in the Code of Practice. For all pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need, assessment, recording and reporting all meet statutory requirements and the provision outlined in the statement is implemented by the school. The school cares well for pupils known to need particular attention. It caters very well for those pupils with a physical disability and works very closely with all outside agencies.

65. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, including the elimination of bullying and oppressive behaviour, are good. The current behaviour policy is dated, and is being revised to make it more relevant to the needs of current staff and pupils. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are well recorded, either within a department, by the head of year or, for the more serious or persistent problems by the assistant headteacher. Any bullying or harassment is recorded in the same way. To improve the situation further, a behaviour improvement team has been set up to consider a number of initiatives to form the basis of the new policy. This action has good potential to involve the whole school in a common approach to behaviour.

66. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance at school. Any unexplained absences are followed up with a letter and the involvement of the educational welfare service where necessary. Although attendance is good, the school knows that some of its pupils have unsatisfactory or poor attendance records. The identification of these pupils and any underlying reasons are also a focus for the assistant headteacher. He is reviewing ways of promoting the attendance of all pupils, including acknowledging those with good records.

Sixth form

Assessment

67. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The majority of subject teachers adheres to the school's three point scale for assessing and marking students' work. Marking is usually detailed and informative, with useful references to target grades and assessment criteria. This helps students to appreciate their individual strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

68. Some good practices exist in English, design and technology and in business education; procedures are more modest in the theory components of physical education. In mathematics, students appreciate the model solutions which teachers provide as aids to understanding how to improve their answers. Whilst most teachers make regular, explicit links to examination grades on key assignments or end of module tests, the marking of coursework is less systematic or informative. Lower attaining students in particular would benefit from improvements in this area.

69. The diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs is satisfactory. Students new to the school in Year 12 receive individual guidance from the head of sixth form, tutors and subject teachers in selecting appropriate courses of study. Well-established procedures for the transfer of Year 11 records from the main school, for analysing students' attainment on entry then setting realistic targets, contribute to some promising developments. Sound practices include extra support in modern foreign languages if a student's oral work is weak and monitoring every student in each area of the examination art course. Higher attainers are closely monitored and supported in design technology to help them achieve well.

70. The use of assessment information to inform curricular planning is also satisfactory. Examples include: introducing an A-level psychology course to meet the academic needs

and interests of students, when formerly it was provided via adult education; amending schemes of work in art when projects prove to be unsuccessful.

71. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are very good. Comprehensive record keeping systems are in place at school and department level. Rigorous analyses of the available data occur on a regular basis, including extensive work on value added. These measures ensure that the director and subject teachers are in a strong position to monitor and support the progress of sixth formers. By the end of the autumn term of Year 12, all students receive details of their examination target grades in each subject.

Advice, support and guidance

72. Students in the sixth form receive very good support and guidance. The staff know the students very well and are sensitive to their needs. They provide very good support for students to help them cope with the changes in the way they are taught, and the need for them to be much more independent and responsible for their own learning. Very good information is available to students and parents about the sixth form prior to entry. There are good procedures for Year 11 pupils, whether from the main school or elsewhere, to visit and discuss the courses they may wish to cover. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves, even if they have not done particularly well in their examinations at the end of Year 11. Students go on to university through routes other than the traditional one of GCSEs and A-levels.

73. Sixth form annual reports are very good, and contain both target grades and a progress measure. Written comments from the director of the sixth form and tutors show that they know the students as individuals. The quality of subject reports is invariably very good. Those in psychology are excellent; they comment on progress and attainment in all aspects of the course; they identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in the subject, then give advice on how to improve. Reports are also very detailed in English, leisure and recreation and the community sports leaders award. In mathematics, teachers give useful pointers to help students improve coursework and revision skills. Occasionally, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' comments. By Year 13, most students show themselves to be very realistic in their self evaluation comments on progress in each subject. They compile very useful National Records of Achievement, which include some high quality word-processed personal statements.

74. Very good careers information and support is provided for students. Good information is available through the careers library and the interviews arranged for them with the careers service. Very good support is provided for students wishing to apply for higher education. The process is started in good time, with students regularly updating their records and personal statements. Students take part in mock interviews to help prepare them for university and college admission procedures. Students who have an idea of what career they want to follow are encouraged to undertake relevant work experience.

75. There are good induction arrangements for students entering the sixth form. Students, and their parents if they wish, attend an enrolment day after the release of GCSE results. A contract will already have been issued setting out the conditions under which the courses are taken. Students who did not attend this school in Years 7 to 11 say that they are made to feel very welcome, they have made friends and help has always been available. Tutors are encouraged to promote new friendships, and the whole year group takes part in an ice breaking activity such as ten pin bowling in Plymouth.

76. Although there is no formal requirement to monitor attendance this is done well. Tutors are aware of the attendance of students, especially in the basic skills courses where it is actively monitored. Cornwall is part of the educational maintenance award pilot scheme and

to receive this a certain level of attendance is required; this is recorded by the sixth form administrative officer who deals with all claims for payment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

77. The parents see this as a good school, and all parts of its community are supportive of, and show confidence in, its work. Nearly all parents who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the high level of expectations the school sets for their children and feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns or problems. Parents say that their children like school, that they are generally happy with the teaching their children receive, and they like the progress their children make, both academically and in terms of personal development. They also express satisfaction with the range of activities provided outside the classroom. Inspection findings support all these positive comments. However, parents are concerned about a number of areas. About a quarter of those responding do not feel that they are provided with good quality information on how their children are doing, and one in five feels the school does not work closely with them. A smaller number feels that the amount of homework received is not appropriate for their children. Inspectors judge that the quality of information provided for parents through reports is good, and that the school tries hard to work closely with parents through meetings and the availability of a senior member of staff to deal with problems. The provision of homework is judged to be satisfactory overall, although there are shortcomings in some areas.

78. The quality of information provided to parents is good. Regular newsletters provide parents with up to date information and a calendar of events for the school. Other letters sent target the parents of the pupils concerned. Parents normally receive a full report and a brief interim progress sheet each year. The annual written report uses a very good common format, which enables the school to send parents good information on their child's attainment and progress. Each pupil's targets, and the progress towards meeting them, are stated clearly using examination grades or National Curriculum levels. The quality of subject teachers' comments is mostly good. The best reports identify the pupil's strengths, weaknesses and suggest steps to improve or reach the appropriate target grade; good examples exist in English, French, mathematics, science, geography, design technology and religious education. In 2001, the school failed to comply with the statutory requirement to report on the progress in of all its pupils in information and communication technology. Plans are in hand to rectify this omission in 2002.

79. The school has satisfactory links with its parents. Parents are invited to annual meetings with teachers. This process is currently under review for some year groups. During the inspection, the school ran this event for Year 8 in a different format for the first time. Teachers provided written information for the group tutor. Thus parents made a 20 minute appointment to see the tutor only to talk through how their child was doing with the pupil present. Parents found the whole process very much easier and simpler. Efforts will be made to contact the small proportion of parents who did not attend. An advantage of this system is that tutors now have a better overview of the pupils in their tutor groups. Parents are always welcome to see any member of staff if there is a need. Pupils are provided with a home school diary with space for tutors and parents to exchange information. Where this is used, it provides a good and effective means of communication. The school has held a number of meetings recently about 'Learning to Learn'. This was appreciated by those who attended giving them an insight into how they and their children learn in a variety of ways.

80. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to the work of the school, and that of their children at school and at home. All parents belong to the Liskeard School and Community College Association. The association organises fund raising events such as the Christmas Bazaar and Summer Fair. Money raised is used to support the school for example by

maintaining the minibus and providing rugby kit for teams. There are satisfactory arrangements for home/school contracts; sixth formers also sign a contract with the school.

81. The special educational needs co-ordinator values parents and encourages them to support their child's learning. Consultation and liaison are promoted by involving parents of statemented pupils in review and planning meetings; encouraging parents to contact staff at parents and options evenings and by asking parents to contribute orally and in writing to annual reviews and transitional plans for statemented pupils.

82. Sixth form students have generally positive views of the school's provisions. They are particularly pleased with their relationships with staff. They feel that teachers know them well and provide help when it is needed. As a result, they are confident that the school helped them to settle well into the sixth form, and that they are treated as mature adults. Students like the good range of courses available to them, and the fact that they are encouraged to study and to do independent research in a wide range of subjects. Inspectors agree with these positive aspects of the sixth form's work.

83. A significant minority of students expressed concerns about the advice that they received about course choice, on the academic and personal progress that they are making, and their subsequent careers. Inspectors feel that this reflects the timing of the questionnaire, coming as it did very early in the school year. During the inspection, further discussions with students, and examination of procedures, revealed a far more positive picture and a greater satisfaction with provisions. Inspectors judge the school's arrangements in these areas to be very good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

84. The overall quality of leadership and management at the school is good. There is a good reflection of its aims in the way in which it works. The headteacher, in his first month at the school at the time of the last inspection, has provided very good leadership, particularly in terms of establishing a more evaluative culture within the school, of planning and prioritising key developments, and of promoting a clear understanding of the diverse nature of present day society. At all levels, the major demands of providing new accommodation have slowed the pace of other changes, although much has been accomplished since the last inspection. Of the key issues from the last inspection, only that relating to curriculum improvements has yet to be tackled. The governors and senior staff rightly awaited the coming together of the school onto one site, and the completion of the new accommodation, before making and implementing detailed plans for the future shape of the curriculum and its delivery. They are rightly considering how the school might benefit from specialist school status in developing a distinctive curriculum philosophy.

85. Throughout the past five years, the headteacher has received very good support from other members of the senior team. Given the headteacher's involvement in the redevelopment of the school, much of the day to day management has fallen on them. Delegation is very good. The recent appointment of an assistant headteacher is starting to have a significant impact upon the management of pupil matters. The appointment also exemplifies the school's commitment to ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds should derive maximum benefit from its provisions. The quality of middle management amongst heads of subject and heads of year is good overall, although there are shortcomings in the management of special educational needs and in music, which have a limiting effect on achievement. In music, planning of the courses offered is unsatisfactory; schemes of work do not reflect the latest requirements. Nor is there an adequate response to whole-school initiatives and policies. The special needs co-ordinator is highly conscientious

and cares deeply for the pupils who attend for small group work or individual tuition. There is now a need for clearer educational direction of special educational needs, and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching across all subjects. The school is currently seeking to appoint a permanent head of learning support in order to ensure that all pupils who have an entitlement receive appropriate teaching to meet their particular needs.

86. The governors and senior managers have found that external bureaucratic demands have had a negative effect on their ability to manage the school, in spite of the school's very good use of management information systems. A major demand on their time has been the negotiation - often protracted, complex and technical - of the Private Finance Initiative for the new buildings at the school. Whilst all concerned acknowledge that the scheme will bring substantial benefits to the school, the time required has exceeded, greatly, initial expectations. Governors and managers are also concerned at the frequent mismatch between software provided, and information required, by government departments and agencies and that commonly available in schools. They also express concern at the number of national initiatives in education, the limited notice period and pace of expected implementation, and the uncertainties thus created in the minds of staff, pupils and parents.

87. Governors work as a cohesive team, with a properly critical, yet supportive, view of the school and its work. They have played an excellent role in bringing the school together onto one site, and in providing a clear strategy for its future development. They are rigorous in evaluating the school's effectiveness, and have recently changed the way in which they maintain contact with subjects in order to gain a clearer picture of how the school operates. As a result, they have an excellent picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Thus all of the key issues for the main school identified in this report are priorities in the current school development plan. They acknowledge that statutory curriculum requirements are not yet fully met, and thus are unsatisfactory, but intend that provision will match requirements from 2002, when they will have the space and equipment available to do so.

88. The school's arrangements for strategic planning, criticised at the last inspection, have been revised, and are now very good. The whole-school development plan takes a long term view, with detailed annual plans being mirrored by suitable departmental and team plans. These enable the school's realistic targets for improvement to be met well. The planning processes provide the basis for the school's good systems for the evaluation and monitoring of its work, which now include the direct observation of teachers by senior managers. Formal reviews are conducted at regular intervals, and the results used to identify future planning priorities, as well as to identify best practice in the classroom. Middle managers need to spend more time monitoring the work of their teams, however. Overall, however, the scale of the many changes in recent years demonstrates a very good commitment on the part of the staff to improve the school. There is a very positive culture that is communicated to the pupils.

89. The staffing level is good. The match of teachers' qualifications to subjects taught is very good, leading to good learning across the attainment range. Teachers also enjoy the support of a very good range of technical and administrative staff. The relatively large number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs means the school has an above average number of learning support assistants. They are well deployed so that their impact on learning is maximised. However, given the large proportion of pupils on the special needs register, learning would be improved further if there were more support staff.

90. The school holds Investors in People status in recognition of the positive way that it works with its staff. All adults who work for the school are valued. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are good, as are the manner in which, in partnership with other institutions, it is involved in the training of new teachers. Staff development needs, for teachers and non-teaching staff alike, are identified clearly, and matched to development

priorities. The arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of staff are good.

91. Accommodation in the main school is good and there has been considerable development since the last inspection, not least in bringing all pupils onto one site, albeit through the use of temporary classrooms in the short term. Accommodation in music, art, drama and geography are excellent. At present, some departments are housed in temporary accommodation pending completion of the final phase of building work. A substantial new building, which is being provided as part of a Private Finance Initiative, will provide further new science and technology facilities for September 2002. This will, in turn, allow other spaces around the school to be developed during 2003 to provide for a new and larger learning resource centre, and a central location for special educational needs. Plans also allow for better circulation around the site and the provision of a coach park away from pedestrian areas.

92. The school's spending on learning resources is slightly higher than in most schools. In the main school, resource provision is satisfactory. The number of new computers is only fractionally behind the national average. The maintenance and expansion of information and communications technology provision have been carefully planned and costed, as have the excellent new facilities in design and technology. However, in physical education and English, pupils do not at present have sufficient access to computers; this should improve with the final phase of building works. The number of books in the library is restricted because of the relatively cramped space in the present library. In the interim the school makes good use of other book loan facilities to compensate for any shortfall. The planned resource centre will allow an increase in present stock levels. Resources are very good in art, information and communication technology, and in physical education. They are good in English, history, and drama, and are satisfactory in all other subjects apart from science, where some equipment is dated.

93. The strategic use of resources is good. Specific grants, for example those for special educational needs or for staff training, are used properly. The school is good at matching spending to educational priorities through its well-costed development plans. The seemingly large budget surplus at the end of the financial year 2000/2001 reflected planned provisions for changes in pupil numbers and new equipment in the autumn term. By the end of the current year, any surplus is planned to be very small. Governors ensure that a proper balance is struck between providing sufficient suitably qualified staff, and the need to provide proper surroundings and learning resources. Spending relative to income is biased slightly towards Years 7 to 9, and against Years 10 and 11, but this reflects the relative sizes of the two age groups at present. None the less, its effects are seen in the good achievement that occurs in the first three years of the school. There are good arrangements for securing best value, for example in the acquisition of new computers, and in the deployment of learning support staff to maximise the benefits of their time. The provision of new premises through a Private Finance Initiative partnership is another example, although a consequence is that governors will have slightly less room for manoeuvre when setting future budgets. Financial administration is good; the most recent audit report noted only minor points for action. The provision of new technology is good, both to support administration and learning, as seen by the substantial recent investment in computers throughout the school, and in equipment to allow an innovative approach to the teaching of design and technology.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

94. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, have provided good educational direction, and have resulted in curricular and other provisions that meet the needs of the

students. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Overall, students of all levels of attainment obtain results that are at least in line with expectations. This is a much larger sixth form than average, and the recent appointment of a deputy head of sixth form, and of an administrative assistant, has enabled the school to implement successfully the demands of the new sixth form curriculum. This is seen in the very positive way in which key skills work was introduced. There is a good reflection of the school's aims, evident in the wide range of curriculum pathways on offer. For example, students who have not performed strongly at GCSE can follow a one-year GNVQ course, and if successful, move onto two-year A-level, or equivalent, programmes. The sixth form is therefore successful in being inclusive; students who have the potential to gain from its courses are given the chance to do so, rather than being subject to rigid entry criteria. Strategic planning is satisfactory overall. Many developments in the sixth form flow from the various subject plans. There is an overarching sixth form plan, but this is less sharp than most others. Even though it does flag appropriate priorities, it is less clear on how they are to be delivered, or at what cost.

95. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities to the sixth form very well, for example ensuring that students are taught religious education. It has also made sure that income destined for the sixth form is spent there, rather than being diverted to other parts of the school. Together with the development plans for the school as a whole, this ensures that there is good planning of funding to match educational priorities. Governors have supported initiatives such as the introduction of more vocational courses, including the new AVCE, in order to provide an education that matches the needs of the diverse sixth form community. Governors show a good application of the principles of best value, for example monitoring the take-up of courses, and the costs of their provision, very closely. Governors are aware of where other providers are better placed to meet the needs of students, for example in many of the more vocationally related areas.

96. The school is good at evaluating the outcomes achieved in the sixth form. Students' results are analysed in relation to their earlier GCSE scores, both overall and subject by subject, to ensure that students of all abilities are well served. The analyses also look for evidence of patterns of underachievement by any groups of students. Monitoring of subjects is done as part of whole-school reviews of subjects by senior managers, with the results being published widely to promote good practice. Middle managers, including the head of the sixth form, are less active in monitoring the work of teachers in the classroom.

97. As in the main school, staffing is very good, with specialist teachers communicating their enthusiasm for subjects to the students. Newly qualified teachers and more experienced staff provide a good blend of skills and outlooks. There is also good support from administrative and technical staff. Performance management arrangements are good, and staff development opportunities are well targeted to need, as well as their impact being evaluated.

98. The accommodation for the sixth form is good overall. That for art, drama and music is excellent. Many lessons now take place in the high quality new buildings constructed since the last inspection. Whilst there are still shortcomings in science and in design and technology, these will be overcome when the final stage of the new building work is completed. At present, leisure and tourism suffers from not having a firm base with a sufficiently vocational dimension. The final stage of reorganisation of facilities will provide a bigger library and more common room space for the sixth form; the present areas are cramped for the number of students at the school. The facilities provide satisfactory access for people with visual and physical disabilities.

99. Learning resources for sixth form are good. They benefit from the same whole school level of resource provision as pupils in Years 7 to 11. In addition, they make good use of the computer facilities in the library for Internet research to support their learning and career planning. They also make good use of the books available, and the good ambience for private

study, that the library provides. In subjects, resources are outstanding in art: very good use is made of computers and books that enhance the students of historical and cultural influences. The very good new CAD/CAM facilities enhance learning in design technology. Facilities for information and communication technology and physical education are very good. Resources are good in English, business education, French and vocational education. There are deficiencies in information and communications facilities for students following leisure and tourism / recreation courses. Some science equipment is also outdated.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

100. In preparing their action plan, the governors and senior managers of the school should bear the following key issues in mind. Where these are marked with (*), elements are already incorporated into the school's current development plan. Items marked (+) were also raised as key issues at the last inspection in 1996. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs of the report.

- (1) (*,+) Improve standards and achievement in information and communication technology in Years 7 to 11, paying attention to:
 - a. the need to provide work in all aspects of the subject that, over time, gives sufficient and increasing challenge in all years in order to meet statutory requirements;
 - b. monitoring, regularly and formally, the delivery of the subject to ensure that standards are high enough, and that pupils of all levels of prior attainment achieve appropriately;
 - c. determining the standards of pupils in the subject when they enter the school in order to plan appropriately challenging work for them as individuals; and
 - d. ensuring that parents of pupils in all years receive a written report on progress during the year, and at the end of Year 9 at least, the standards reached in the subject. (8, 29, 42, 62, 78, 154 to 159)

- (2) (*,+) Improve the school's curriculum for Years 7 to 11, paying particular attention to:
 - a. the negative effects of the present programme of two modern languages in Years 8 and 9 on the time allocations in other subjects;
 - b. the limited range of curriculum pathways currently available to pupils in Years 10 and 11; and

c. the need to provide sufficient time for option subjects, and to allow statutory requirements in religious education to be met in Years 10 and 11. (41 to 43, 177)

- (3) Improve the management of pupils with special educational needs, by:
- a. providing individual education plans that contain sharply focused targets for pupils that relate to their needs, and success criteria for them;
 - b. involving pupils in the formulation and regular review of plans and targets;
- and
- c. monitoring the work of teachers in all subjects to ensure that they know what pupils' plans contain, and have the necessary skills to enable them to be met. (35, 47, 85)

In addition to the above key issues, the following lesser weakness might be considered for inclusion into the action plan:

In music, improve the effectiveness of teaching in Years 7 to 9, and the quality of schemes of work, assessment and target setting in all years. (29, 31, 85, 167 to 170)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the achievements of lower attaining pupils in design and technology, and in information and communication technology key skills, by providing sufficient teaching that meets their individual needs. (57, 195 to 200, 206 to 209)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	145
	Sixth form	77
Number of planned discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		118

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 to 11							
Number	3	27	63	45	9	0	0
Percentage	2	19	43	31	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	25	35	13	0	0	0
Percentage	5	32	45	17	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 points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1067	263
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	140	-

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	54	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	423	9

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	85

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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 Year 9

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	94	102	196

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	67	68
	Girls	81	73	75
	Total	133	140	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (58)	71 (67)	73 (67)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (16)	53 (41)	45 (37)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56	69	66
	Girls	76	80	78
	Total	132	149	144
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (59)	76 (72)	73 (64)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (21)	53 (48)	42 (28)
	National	31 (31)	41 (39)	32 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Year 11

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	120	97	217

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	52	116	116
	Girls	44	92	94
	Total	96	208	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (42)	96 (91)	97 (97)
	National	47 (47)	89 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.8 (38)
	National	38.1 (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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	45	67
	National		n/a

Attainment at the end of Year 13

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	68	66	134

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	(14.5)	(15.6)	(15.1)	(2.2)	(4.4)	(3.1)
National	(17.7)	(18.6)	(18.2)	(2.6)	(2.9)	(2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19	84.2
	National		(76.6)

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	-
Indian	-
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	1322
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	37	8
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	79.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	40
Total aggregate hours worked per week	931

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	20.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3809732
Total expenditure	3655212
Expenditure per pupil	2718
Balance brought forward from previous year	8242
Balance carried forward to next year	162762

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.7 FTE
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.2 FTE

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1348
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	62	8	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	52	6	2	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	58	9	4	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	61	16	4	2
The teaching is good.	19	66	4	1	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	49	20	5	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	54	7	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	50	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	53	12	6	8
The school is well led and managed.	26	55	7	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	60	8	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	7	2	9

Other issues raised by parents

Twenty-nine parents submitted written comments. Most were positive about the school, many unreservedly so. Where criticism was made, it most frequently concerned homework arrangements.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN YEARS 7 TO 11.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards in tests in Year 9 have improved, and standards seen in lessons have risen.
- The new head of department is providing good leadership, based on raising standards still further.
- There is a proper focus on learning when planning lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Upper middle and higher attaining pupils in mixed ability groups in Years 7 to 9 could be challenged further.
- Teachers need to make more use of short term target setting in their day to day work.
- Monitoring, evaluation and development need to be more secure.

101. Results in the 2001 end of Year 9 national tests were broadly average, an improvement on the below average results of 1999 and 2000. In 2000, girls did significantly better than boys, but this gap was not significant in 2001 because of the improvement in the boys' results. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected Level 5 was average, as it was at the higher Level 6 or better. Overall, the 2001 results represent satisfactory achievement overall in relation to the pupils' attainments at entry.

102. In the 2001 GCSE English language examination, the results were below average. Pupils tended to do less well in English language than in the other subjects that they took. Achievement was unsatisfactory because fewer pupils reached grade C or better than would be expected from their earlier test scores at the end of Year 9. The proportion of pupils reaching grades A* to C in 2001 was lower than in 1999 and 2000. There was no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. In English literature and media studies, the proportion of pupils reaching grade C or higher in 2001 was significantly below average. However, the proportion at grade G or higher was significantly above average, and this represents good achievement by lower attaining pupils. Pupils tended to do better in literature than in most of their other subjects, although the gap between the standards of boys and girls was wider than in most schools. The 2001 results in English literature and media studies were an improvement on those of 2000, but still below the 1999 levels.

103. Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are average. This good achievement from the pupils' standards at entry results from a more explicit approach to the development of writing and reading skills that emerged under the previous head of department. This approach is being consolidated under the new head of department. Consequently, a higher proportion of middle attaining pupils is reaching the expected Level 5 in their work. Those who do not reach this level, mainly boys, have weaknesses in the presentation, organisation, and accuracy of their writing. Standards of speaking and listening are average. Higher attainers are very articulate. A few pupils are below average because of weakness in clear, formal expression. Not enough of the upper middle and higher attaining pupils are fulfilling their potential in the mixed ability teaching groups. They do not have enough sharply focused opportunities for the in-depth study of demanding texts. In contrast, the support given to lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is good and helps them to make good progress. Teachers know these pupils well and amend materials suitably to suit their needs.

104. Standards seen in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement because these pupils' standards were below average at the end of Year 9. Standards are higher than in last year's examinations because good progress has been made by a more explicit approach to learning that demonstrates and develops the skills the pupils need, both in course work and in examinations. Standards of speaking and listening are above average across the attainment range. Only a small number of lower attaining pupils have difficulty expressing themselves with clarity and formality. Higher attainers analyse texts successfully, responding to the greater degree of challenge that they receive in the higher sets. Middle attaining pupils know, understand and enjoy the texts they study. Their standards are broadly average. A smaller proportion of pupils is below average because they tend to identify only the main features of a text, but they show good recall and enjoyment. The pupils have made good improvements in writing. Higher attainers write technically flawless work that engages the reader. The organisation, coherence and accuracy of most middle attainers have also improved to help them produce course work more consistently at C grade. Those who fail to do this do so because of inaccuracy and a lack of clear standard English in their written expression. A major challenge for the middle attaining pupils is to replicate their more secure writing and focused reading standards in an examination context. A few pupils are well below average in writing and did not progress well through Year 10. However, the demanding teaching they now receive is leading to much improved work. Pupils with special educational needs sustain their good progress. They respond to high expectations regarding examination entry. Some are in the higher sets and in line to gain high grades. The small number of pupils from minority backgrounds achieves in line with their peers.

105. The department is not systematically helping to develop the pupils' application of numeracy skills. Its use of information and communications technology is satisfactory. However, a lack of identified opportunities, access to machines and - in some cases - teachers' inexperience are restricting the consistent use of computers to raise standards in English.

106. Standards of teaching and learning are good. The teachers' subject expertise is a clear strength. As a result, pupils know, understand and enjoy the texts that they study. Planning is also good. The determination to improve standards is resulting in a stronger focus on what the pupils need to learn, and then identifying tasks to help them learn well. Very good examples were seen with two Year 11 sets of different standards. A higher attaining set made great progress in securing and then applying their understanding of how to deal with comprehension questions in the examination. The teacher's thorough planning, rigorous timing of tasks, and explicit exemplification of the way to tackle and answer the questions resulted in very strong gains in learning. A similarly explicit approach was equally successful with low attaining Year 11 pupils learning how to use their understanding of Simon Armitage's poetry to answer an examination question. These lessons also used other effective methods such as a blend of whole class, pair, group and individual work. As a result the pupils' interest was sustained; they worked hard and produced work of good quality and quantity. This very good practice is not consistently embedded across the department but there is clear evidence of a move towards it. The attitudes of the pupils are usually positive but some boys in Year 9 distract other pupils. Another weakness in a small number of lessons was that the atmosphere when pupils worked individually was not focused and concentrated enough. In these lessons, not all pupils did as well as they should, and expectations needed to be higher.

107. Marking is informative overall and homework is set regularly. The pupils' knowledge of their target levels and grades is good, especially in Years 9 to 11. However, there is not yet enough reference to the criteria for grades and levels. Pupils are not clear enough about which grade and level criteria they need to improve in order to progress. Targets are long term only, and not broken down into short term goals.

108. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 9 are higher, and better standards are emerging in Year 11, though these still have to be reached in GCSE examinations. Assessment procedures are better. The growing emphasis on learning in curriculum and lesson planning is having a good impact on standards. The new head of department is unequivocally committed to raising standards, and is receiving good support from his team. He has not yet had time to establish a systematic approach to the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning. A good core curriculum and a consistent approach to learning provision are emerging. The provision needs to consolidate the consistency of short term planning so lessons throughout the department consistently reach the standards shown in the best.

Reading and writing across the curriculum

109. The provision for the development of literacy skills across the school is satisfactory. The working party set up in response to the last inspection produced satisfactory guidelines to support the presentation of work, the use of key subject words and the introduction of a weekly 20 minute session of sustained silent reading for Year 7 pupils. The school's monitoring of the effect of the guidelines revealed an uneven picture, one that is confirmed by inspection evidence.

110. The school's response to the current initiative on literacy in Years 7 to 9 is good, but it is too soon to gauge its impact on standards. A very enthusiastic and well informed co-ordinator is effectively guiding developments. A recent staff training day has resulted in each subject identifying highly appropriate priorities for development, for example, the improvement of analytical writing in mathematics. Good liaison with primary schools has also prompted fresh ways of tackling literacy matters.

111. There is some very good practice: religious education and science are setting good examples. The correct use of key terms is a clear and constant priority in each subject. In religious education, the support and guidance for essay writing is very good. At the same time, Year 7 pupils receive effective support through the use of techniques that enhance their continuous writing. In science, there is an effective emphasis on note making and expecting the pupils to use their own words when explaining their knowledge and understanding. Other subjects that develop key vocabulary well are information and communication technology (although there is not always enough emphasis on spelling), physical education and geography. A Year 8 class benefited from the glossary of terms included in a topic on Egypt. Although other subjects have identified key terms, there is not always enough reference to them during lessons.

112. Pupils have the opportunity to read in many subjects, but there is little evidence of teachers systematically expecting or encouraging a range of reading methods such as skimming or scanning. In history, pupils are using other means of recording information such as mind mapping, but there is not enough demonstration of how to transfer information into continuous writing and paragraphs.

113. The emergence of the national strategy gives the school the opportunity to produce a formal policy. This will not only advise on good practice; it will also provide an effective means of evaluating the impact of literacy in subjects and identifying issues for future development.

Media Studies (Main school)

114. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average. The pupils have a positive attitude and speak knowledgeably about the features and purposes of the front page lay out of a tabloid

newspaper. Teaching is good. The setting of clear objectives and tasks at the start of the lesson enables the pupils to work productively and independently because they understand what is required of them.

Drama (main school)

115. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were significantly below average and not as high as the average results of 2000. Attendance problems and some staffing difficulties prior to the examination were factors that affected the 2001 results. Standards seen during the inspection are average in Year 9 and 11. The pupils show good achievement and are making good progress in the development of their performance skills. They enjoy lessons and join in the activities with enthusiasm. In Year 11, the pupils' good progress was exemplified by the maturity and control they exhibited over a range of dramatic activities. One group was extremely focused in helping each other prepare monologues. Each individual performance and the pupils' subsequent evaluation showed good knowledge of the factors that enhance audience impact. In the other group the teacher taught in role for much of the lesson. Pupils stayed in their own roles in a whole class improvised piece that lasted for some 15 minutes. Mature understanding of the conventions of drama work were principal strengths. This progress results from very good specialist teaching that, while presenting real challenge, also develops confidence. Both teachers seen are specialists with excellent understanding of the content and the teaching methods of their subject. The department is well led and managed. Examination results are analysed objectively, and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are regular and rigorous. The department's new accommodation is excellent, and its ambience enhances standards. Drama also contributes very effectively to the pupils' personal development through a thriving extra-curricular programme, and a good focus on important issues such as prejudice and racism.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The above average standards being reached at the ends of Year 9 and 11.
- The positive effects of the specialist teachers' subject knowledge.
- The positive relationships between teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching could still cater more effectively for the full range of abilities.
- Using and applying mathematics could be improved in all years.
- A policy is needed to promote the development of numeracy across the curriculum

116. In the 2001 national tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9, standards were above average. The number of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 was average, whilst the proportion reaching Level 6 was above average. The teachers' own assessments of standards were broadly in line with the test results. The performance of girls and boys is similar and, over the last three years, results have remained above average. Since the pupils' standards on entry to the school were broadly average, achievement is better than would be expected.

117. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, standards in mathematics were average. The proportion of A* to C grades was average, whereas that of A* to G grades was above. Over the last three years, the average point score has continued to increase. More detailed analyses in 2001 indicate that relative to their performance in other subjects, boys

did significantly better in mathematics than their other subjects while the performance of girls is below that of boys in terms of A* to C grades and A* to G grades. On the basis of their national test results in Year 9 two years earlier, pupils show achievement in mathematics that is good, with results above expectations.

118. On the evidence of the pupils' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, and achievement is good. The work covers all of the Attainment Targets, with an appropriate emphasis given to pupils' mental skills, including a programme of support for lower attaining pupils. There is less emphasis given to using and applying mathematics, so that pupils' mathematical thinking skills are weak. Pupils can identify patterns in linear sequences, and identify the symmetries of different shapes, but their drawing and graphicacy work is not sufficiently practised. Higher attaining pupils can identify patterns in quadratic sequences and use trial and improvement methods to solve cubic equations.

119. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. This is above recent examination results as a result of more focused teaching and careful monitoring of underachievement. The work covers all of the Attainment Targets, but again, there is too little emphasis given to using and applying mathematics. Mental skills are insufficiently developed, so that errors such as $6 \times 8 = 47$ are common. Pupils have a good knowledge of circle theorems, although their drawing and graphicacy work remain weak and pupils are unable to draw the loci of points sufficiently accurately to meet examination requirements. Higher attaining pupils can simplify algebraic expressions and solve problems involving three dimensions using Pythagoras' Theorem. Across Years 10 and 11, pupils again show good achievement, and progress well over time in their work. In all years, there is little difference between the achievement of girls and boys, or the small number of pupils from minority backgrounds.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and lesson planning is very full. There is a good balance of teacher exposition and pupil practice, so that the pupils are actively involved in the lesson and consolidate their new knowledge. Teachers enjoy positive and good humoured relationships with their pupils. Behaviour is managed very well, and teachers use praise to good effect in motivating and encouraging pupils. Lessons are concluded with a recapitulation of the work. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils were challenged to discuss which aspects of the lesson they had found easy and what they had found hard. However, in a significant minority of lessons, too little attention is given to the spread of ability in the class, so that all pupils get the same work, and able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers have a good awareness of the individual strengths and weaknesses of pupils and work is assessed against targets, which allows progress to be carefully tracked. Target grades set for the most able pupils are not sufficiently demanding.

121. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in all years. Pupils are attentive and committed to their work and support one another when they find the work difficult. They enjoy positive relationships with the teacher so that in a Year 8 lesson on solving equations, for example, a pupil felt able to share his own correct method of finding the n th term of a linear equation with the teacher and other pupils. However, in a small number of classes, pupils demonstrate poor attitudes to their work especially when they find the work too easy or too hard.

122. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils are well supported by the teacher, although they do not always take sufficient notice of their individual requirements. Learning support assistants, where present, offer good support to pupils and, as in a Year 8 lesson, the assistant's confident and competent appreciation of mathematics was used to good effect in supporting a more able pupil in his work. The provision for able

pupils is inconsistent, although able pupils in Year 9 are given additional support by staff in their free time. However, in a Year 7 mixed ability class, an able pupil confirmed that he had already done the work on percentages in the primary school and, in another class, able pupils were not challenged, but were allowed to get on with their homework in the lesson.

123. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and good curriculum links are provided with partner primary schools. Departmental staff make regular visits to ensure curriculum continuity. The provision for literacy within the department is satisfactory, and staff have a good awareness of the importance of technical vocabulary. Key words are identified in lesson planning and written on the board, although rarely referred to in the teaching. The provision for information and communication technology is broadly satisfactory, although inconsistent, across the department. Good use is made of graphical calculators and the department makes good use of a commercial revision package for less able pupils although access to computers remains a problem.

124. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The leadership of the department ensures a clear educational direction for mathematics at the school. The head of department has a very good awareness of the strengths of the department as a result of his monitoring and his analysis of assessment data and external examination results. The department development plan is well focused on priorities and the department has responded well to the revisions of the National Curriculum, the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and the changes at GCSE. The head of department engenders a strong team spirit among his committed and hard working team of teachers. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a capacity to succeed.

125. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The GCSE results remain above the national average. Standards in lessons in all years are better, and are now above average. The quality of teaching in mathematics is a strength, and the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. The marking of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection and there is a more rigorous procedure for monitoring and supporting teaching practices. The departmental development plan is well focused, properly costed and includes detailed success criteria. The department is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards.

Numeracy across the curriculum

126. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory and number work is developed well in history and physical education. In a Year 11 science lesson, the pupils' understanding of fractions allowed them to explain the relationship between area and pressure, thus demonstrating their understanding of inverse proportion. Algebraic skills are used well in dance to identify rhythm and to develop formulae for spreadsheets in information and communication technology. In art, pupils confidently represent three-dimensional images in two dimensions, whilst statistics work is promoted in languages, food technology and information and communication technology, although representations lack proper analysis. At present, there is no policy to provide a coherent framework to develop pupils' numeracy skills. Recent developments have included appointing a numeracy co-ordinator who is beginning to raise the profile of mathematics through a variety of activities such as numeracy tutorials in Year 7 and a weekly numeracy puzzle in the newsletter

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Years 7 to 9.

- Teaching is good overall, and there is good teamwork in the department.
- There is a good balance of coverage of all aspects of the subject.
- The pupils' investigative skills have improved.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching could be more consistent across pupils of different attainment levels, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- The department needs better equipment.
- The subject could do more to integrate information and communication technology into its work.

127. Pupils' standards in science on entry to the school are generally average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, standards were above average for all schools. This represents good achievement by pupils during Years 7 to 9 in relation to their standards at entry. Results in Year 9 in the last four years have consistently been above the national average; the average point score in 2001 is the highest achieved in this time. There is no consistent difference between the results of boys and girls.

128. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001 at the end of Year 11 were broadly average overall in terms of average points scores. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A* to C increased to an average level. By contrast, the proportion gaining grades A* to G was above average. Overall, pupils, including higher and lower attainers, gained results that were broadly in line with what would be expected from their Year 9 test scores two years earlier, representing satisfactory achievement over time. The performance of boys was better than that of girls in 2001, but there are no consistent differences over the years. When comparing results with those which pupils obtained in their other subjects, boys tended to do better in science than in the other subjects that they took, but girls tended to do less well. Results in the last four years for the whole year group have been consistently below the national average in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades.

129. In work seen during the inspection, standards are generally above average in Years 7 to 9, and average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievements are therefore variable as they progress through the school but overall, are satisfactory. During the inspection, a high proportion of work seen concentrated on physical processes, but work in pupils' books indicated that there is a good balance throughout Years 7 to 11 of all of the Attainment Targets in the National Curriculum. Pupils from Year 7 onwards recognise the priority given to providing opportunities to learn science by doing and by observing. This has improved pupils' investigative skills since the last inspection. For instance, in an excellent lesson in Year 9, higher attaining pupils were very involved when using light gates and data loggers to measure the average speed of a trolley moving down a slope. They repeated their readings in order to obtain a mean value for the time, and then varied the slope to investigate how this affected their results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, especially in Years 7 to 9, and particularly when a learning support assistant is present to provide extra help. These pupils are well known to their teachers, including their specific areas of difficulty; this helps in the provision of work at the appropriate levels. The few pupils from minority groups achieve at appropriate levels.

130. Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall. Lesson objectives are clear, often written on the board at the start of the lesson, and accompanied by the key words to be used. There is insufficient encouragement for pupils to say new words. In a minority of classes, teachers encourage pupils to use their own words to explain their observations in writing; this improves both their standard of literacy and their ability to answer questions fluently in examinations. There is less consistency in the development of numeracy skills, though there are frequent opportunities to use number. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils calculated the pressure acting on a floor, given the force and area, and developed

good habits in using the correct units. Pupils are over-dependant on their calculators, for example when dividing 700 by 0.5, and are not required to change the subject of the formula. There is inconsistency in the use of graphs, and pupils' ability to draw and use graphs are consequently variable. In a Year 9 class, pupils take readings of the friction between different soles and the floor. Their analysis of their results is not so effective because of their uncertainty when drawing graphs about the axes, the scales, and whether or not to use a line graph. The use of information and communication technology is inconsistent across the curriculum; opportunities to develop the pupils' skills in this area are being missed.

131. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11; some is excellent. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is good; they often add interest to lessons through their use of background information, and they respond well to pupils' questions. Planning for what is to be taught in lessons is good, but less time is devoted to planning the activities through which pupils will learn. As a consequence, lessons are sometimes lacking in inspiration, and do not always capture pupils' interest in the subject; in these cases, less learning takes place. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson to consolidate pupils' ability to read distance/time graphs, planning was unsatisfactory, and the examples used were not at the correct level of difficulty. A significant number of pupils therefore failed to concentrate, and learning was only satisfactory. By contrast, pupils in a Year 7 class responded well to their teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, and the activities planned helped their understanding of solids, liquids and gases. They enjoyed the lesson and learned the meanings of key words such as evaporation and condensation. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary according to the work provided, and the teacher's approach to the lesson. Wherever the teacher shows enthusiasm, and has planned activities at the correct level of challenge, pupils work well. There is a tendency for a minority of teachers to dominate lessons, which restricts the chances for pupils to learn by using their initiative. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the varying hardness of solids, the teacher addressed the class virtually throughout, testing their powers of concentration to the limit, and reducing their learning. On the other hand, in a good Year 10 lesson on blood vessels, a good range of activities was planned for pupils; these consolidated their learning and their understanding of the structure and function of arteries, capillaries and veins, while the teacher provided quiet support for those having difficulty. Homework is set regularly, but sometimes lacks challenge and therefore interest for the higher attaining pupils in each class. The marking of pupils' work is improving, with more teachers providing encouragement for pupils by the use of suggestions for improving their work.

132. The leadership and management of the science department are good. The teachers and technicians work very well as a team. The curriculum is well structured and provides good guidance for teachers to plan their work. While teachers are trained to use information and communication technology, however, and access has improved since the previous inspection, there is still inconsistency in its application across the department. There are regular assessments of pupils' work, with target setting well established, and targets subject to review. Where this is used effectively, it adds purpose to lessons and to pupils' work. Heads of subject undertake a thorough analysis of examination data to monitor the improvement made in each class. There are insufficient lesson observations and the consequent sharing of good practice within the department in order to improve teaching skills. Department meetings, for instance, concentrate on curriculum and administrative matters. There is a detailed development plan with appropriate priorities for the future, but the overall commitment to devising strategies for improving standards is only satisfactory. The move to the new science laboratories will provide the impetus to review the quality of books and equipment within the department, so that only good quality resources are retained for use in the teaching of science.

133. Since the last inspection, the science department has made satisfactory progress. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good, as is the challenge for higher

attaining pupils; in both instances, this is most noticeable in Years 7 to 9. Investigative skills have improved. There is also a bigger commitment to improving the quality of marking, though it is still inconsistent, and the shortage of text books has been overcome. Against these improvements, there are areas which remain largely unchanged. More monitoring of the work of individual teachers is required by those with specific responsibilities within the department. Though teaching is good overall, there are still basic weaknesses, and insufficient recognition is given to the importance of developing consistent teaching and pupil management skills across the department, in order to capitalise on the detailed planning of the work of the department.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, which has improved since the last inspection.
- Excellent accommodation and resources that are used well.
- The inclusive ethos of the subject, leading to good enjoyment of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The need to improve the achievement of girls.
- The need to manage the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of boys in some classes.

134. The pupils' standards in art on entry to the school are somewhat below average, because many pupils have below average spatial awareness. Achievement is good, so that in the teachers' own assessments of attainment at the end of Year 9, standards are average. Boys tend to achieve better than girls, gaining higher standards than usually seen for boys; girls' standards are in line with national patterns. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE A* to C results in the 2001 full courses in art were average overall, but with boys gaining better results than boys nationally. In contrast, girls at the school did less well than girls nationally. The above average A* to G results show good achievement for lower attaining pupils including many with special educational needs. In 2000, the A* to C results were below average but showed similarly good achievement to those of 2001 at the A* to G level. Standards in the painting and drawing paper were above average in 2001.

135. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average, with pupils showing good achievement over time because the quality of their two dimensional drawing skills develops very well. The department places a strong focus on improving the pupils' weaknesses in spatial skills. The current project in Year 7 for example, teaches pupils about painting and drawing techniques, while emphasising aspects of line and shape. Pupils therefore learn effectively how to create the illusion of distance and form in two dimensions. Most pupils begin to achieve well from this early stage. Some middle attaining pupils in Year 7 can already paint to an above average level of competence. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, the pupils showed good control over paint as they were developing tones and shades in monochrome studies. This good rate of progress continues, and by the end of Year 9, standards in a variety of two- and three-dimensional media are average. Their strengths lie in painting and drawing, which are often above average. In Year 9, for example, pupils' paintings based on Georgia O'Keefe's plant studies were good. Boys' work is often above average, as it was here. Pupils' brushwork is sensitive and they have a good sense of composition. Drawing is also often above average, with pupils using tone well in Year 8, for example, in graphite drawings of their shoes. Here, perspective and proportion were also a focus and pupils were well able to achieve these effects in their work. Again, boys' work was strong in this project. Pupils' progress in learning about historical and critical aspects is satisfactory.

By Year 9, they know about an appropriate variety of artists, art styles and cultures. Pupils are less good in the evaluation, discursive and written aspects of the curriculum. This is partly because the single 50-minute lessons are very unhelpful, allowing insufficient time for regular discussion about learning and achievements in lessons.

136. In work seen, standards at the end of Year 11 are average overall; achievement is good in relation to the prior attainments of the pupils concerned. A large number of pupils selects art for GCSE. The department offers courses in art and design, and in painting and drawing. The pupils' accrued strengths in two-dimensional work stand them in good stead in Years 10 and 11. The work seen during the inspection in painting and drawing is of above average standard, reflecting good achievement. Again it is the boys' work which shows a higher than average level of skill in their use and control of two-dimensional media. Boys' achievements in Years 10 and 11 are often very good when judged against their prior attainment. Higher attaining girls often choose a textiles/art examination which is not taught within the art department. In other art courses, pupils' work, girls' in particular, shows weaknesses in the personally evaluative nature of the written work which accompanies and informs their practical pieces. Although they learn about historical and critical ideas, often writing appropriately about them, this aspect is insufficiently well linked with their practical studies. Written annotation is unimaginative and does not reflect pupils' individuality well enough. Their learning process through preparatory investigative explorations is insufficiently evident. This is usually a strong aspect of girls' work and needs to be strengthened.

137. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, as is learning. Teachers show a strong commitment to "art for all" and include all pupils equally in the opportunities they provide. The strongest teaching combines the aspects of firm class management, which creates a calm and orderly atmosphere for learning, with strong direct teaching of the skills that pupils need in order to progress well in their studies. Teaching in Years 7 and 8 has improved since the last report, particularly since the move to one site, which has given the department added cohesion. In some classes, the management of unsatisfactory behaviour from a minority of boys in lower years is insufficiently firm. These boys spoil learning for others in these classes. In general though, class management is good. The teachers' expertise, often as working artists themselves, is transmitted well to pupils, who learn effectively from their enthusiasm. Painting and drawing are most often taught rigorously, so most pupils have strong underpinning two-dimensional techniques. This is partly why boys do so well. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, lower attaining pupils, including many with special educational needs, were making very good progress on a project about colour. This lesson exemplified the effective, very sensitively differentiated one-to-one mini-tutorial sessions with teachers, which represent a strength of the department. Pupils, especially girls, now need to learn how to incorporate aspects of reflective, evaluative, individually responsive learning into their coursework to match their standards in technical skills.

138. The department continues to be well managed and has made good improvement since the last report. The monitoring of teaching is good. The department technician is still an important part of the staff team. The impact of the excellent new accommodation, partly designed by staff to their own very high specifications, has had a dramatic effect on provision. Younger pupils who have had no experience in the old accommodation are already showing higher achievement and better attitudes from the start. Resources are also excellent and are well used in the curriculum. Information and communication technology, criticised in the last report, is now used well for research, desk-top publishing and word-processing. The creative use of computers is starting in a Year 7 project about pattern, and now needs further extension. Assessment is now good, setting targets and tracking pupils' progress across the years effectively.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 because teachers get to know the pupils, and their needs, better because of the continuity of teaching.
- Standards amongst boys are improving
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The inappropriate curriculum structure in Years 7 to 9, together with rushed teaching, disadvantages higher and lower attainers.

139. Standards achieved at the end of Year 9 in the teachers' own assessments of attainments in 2001 are average at Level 5 or above, as are those of girls gaining Level 6 and above; boys' standards are below average at the higher level. The overall pattern of results is similar to those achieved in previous years. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the grade A* to C results for design and technology were significantly above the national average, but were significantly below at the A* to G level. The subjects contributing to these results include electronics, graphics, resistant materials and textiles. Pupils on the resistant materials and textiles courses showed good achievement; their results were higher than would be expected given their prior attainment. In the home economics (food) examination, results were average, which again represented good achievement for the pupils in question. The results in the 2001 examinations in these courses show a marked improvement compared with the previous three years because of improvement in boys' results. Results in the graphics and electronics examinations in 2001 showed an overall improvement, even though they were still below average, and represented relative underachievement for the pupils concerned.

140. Standards observed in the work seen at the end of Year 9 are average, and at the end of Year 11 are above average. Between Years 7 and 9, pupils show satisfactory achievement overall. However, there is some underachievement amongst both higher and lower attainers. Achievement is satisfactory overall during Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils achieve well during these years, as they are effective independent learners. For example, in a Year 11 textiles lesson, pupils with a wide range of prior attainment worked efficiently and creatively designing clothes for a fashion show. They displayed a wide range of designing and machining skills, and understood the constraints of fashion under which they would be judged. Lower attainers in Years 10 and 11 are now reaching higher standards than previous examination results indicate, as they are now on courses that suit their interests and abilities more closely. However, the achievements of some lower to middle attaining boys are reduced by poor organisational skills and attitudes. For example, whilst higher attaining girls in a Year 11 graphics lesson were analytical in their questioning and effective in their research, middle attaining boys had poor organisational skills and did not have a feel for the materials or the contexts in which they were working. They possessed a narrow understanding of the essential concepts relevant to their work. Good drawing skills underpin much of the work across the department. For example, lower attaining Year 10 pupils were confidently and effectively generating orthographic drawings as they developed their ideas for manufacturing a range of products in wood and metal. Throughout the school, pupils develop imaginative ideas as with the case of higher attaining Year 9 pupils designing moving toys. They were thinking as carefully about the detail of workable mechanisms as they were about the aesthetics of the design. However, time limits and teaching constraints associated with the organisation of the module prevented the full potential of the ideas from being realised in the final manufactured product. The pupils have good opportunities to use computers in their work. Year 8 pupils were motivated by the knowledge that they could design and make high quality clocks from wood. They were able to apply creative thought using computer aided

design software which enabled them to accurately manufacture intricately detailed products using computer programmed cutting machines. Higher attaining pupils used computers effectively in Years 10 and 11 to aid the development of their ideas in portfolios. They manipulated text and images to clearly illustrate imaginative thought processes and the continuous modification of their ideas as they progress. Pupils also demonstrate satisfactory numeracy in their work.

141. The quality of teaching is good overall, as is learning. The teachers' subject knowledge is good and is used effectively to guide pupils' learning and to raise their interest, which was particularly effective in a Year 11 textiles lesson. Here, the work environment was stimulating with an excellent display of pupils' work and other resources, which contributed to highly creative fashion clothes designs from pupils. The range of methods used by the teacher stemmed from her prior experience as a textile designer. In food lessons throughout the school, very good planning, good organisation of lessons and a well developed and effectively implemented assessment system ensure that all pupils make very good progress. They research their work carefully and evaluate a wide range of food products that they design and make. This helps them to recognise their strengths, weaknesses and formulate subsequent targets. Teachers manage classes well throughout the department, which ensures that pupils make steady progress towards meeting their identified targets. Even so, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of younger boys sometimes affected the work of the whole group. Conscientious marking with good quality oral and written feedback by teachers also contributes to good progress being made. In several resistant materials lessons in Years 7 to 9, the teaching was rushed, was too concerned with the transmission of information, did not promote active reflection by higher attaining pupils and was too intense for lower attaining pupils to access. In large part, this reflects the curriculum organisation of the subject.

142. Achievement during Years 7 to 9 is limited by a timetable which, although it consists of an interesting and worthwhile range of contexts for learning, is taught in minimal time, using inefficient 50-minute time slots. In Years 8 and 9, pupils are taught by too many teachers. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Whilst there is relatively little monitoring of teaching by departmental staff, there is very good monitoring by senior managers, who demonstrate a commitment to the development of the subject. In food and textiles, coherent management has resulted in teachers sharing best practice in order to improve teaching and learning. This does not extend to the resistant materials department, in which staffing difficulties have resulted in low teacher morale and unsatisfactory leadership. The problems have now been resolved, and the future is one of opportunity. New technology accommodation is currently under construction replacing widely spread and basic quality rooms. The department is involved in innovative curriculum development projects involving new technologies to raise its effectiveness, and giving impetus and depth to its work.

143. Overall, the subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There has been a significant improvement in boys' GCSE results at grades A* to C, and there has been an improvement in teaching since the last inspection. In order for standards to improve further, the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 need to be reorganised to ensure that the teaching is made more efficient and that higher and lower attaining pupils are supported in a way that enables them to reach their potential. The standards of lower to middle attaining boys need to be raised by ensuring that the teaching methods adopted are more responsive to their learning needs and best practice in teaching and learning needs to be shared across the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The consistently good teaching
- The high quality support that teachers give leads to good progress.
- The use of high quality displays to promote learning.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of work in terms of National Curriculum levels could be better in Years 7 to 9.

144. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were significantly below the national average at grades A* to C. Boys reached higher standards than girls, but both were well below their respective national averages. However, the 2001 results were adversely affected by staff illness during the year. The 2001 results were higher than those of 2000, but both were affected adversely by the proportion of pupils failing to complete coursework requirements. This meant that overall, pupils tended to do less well in the subject than in the others that they took. However, those who submitted coursework gained results overall that showed satisfactory achievement in relation to earlier standards.

145. In work seen during the inspection the standards that pupils reach at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement, as pupils enter the school with below average standards. Pupils gain a good knowledge of the local area, regions such as Egypt, and the distribution of earthquakes. Most pupils possess an appropriate range of map and graphical skills, and apply numerical skills correctly when using the scale of maps to measure distance and draw graphs of climate patterns. Accuracy in measurement is reduced for some pupils because of untidy presentation and insufficient care when plotting graphs. Pupils' written work is generally satisfactory and uses a range of technical words in appropriate context. The spelling of basic words however, is a weakness for many pupils. Higher attaining students write extended answers in project work. In Year 9 for example, pupils made clear comparisons about development in Italy, but others were weak in explaining the reasons for the differences.

146. In work seen during the inspection pupils' standards at the end of Year 11 are average. This represents a good level of achievement based on their standards at the end of Year 9. They consolidate map skills and produce a good standard of GCSE coursework. For example, pupils in Year 11 conducted an in-depth study of redevelopment of Plymouth showing good research skills and varied techniques of illustrating information. Higher attaining pupils understand concepts about change in urban centres over time, but the standards of average and lower attainers are reduced by a limited range of skills and weakness in explaining the results of findings. Pupils in Year 10 gain knowledge of physical features and processes about flooding in the Ganges delta in Bangladesh. They know terms such as 'levees' and how flooding influence peoples' lives, but many are less secure about why the floods happen. Many pupils write well and pay attention to grammatical accuracy but weak expression and poor spelling reduce the quality of work of others.

147. The quality of teaching and learning is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' learn well because teachers plan work to consolidate gains made in previous lessons. Pupils with special educational need make good progress because they are given additional support in class. They respond well to help and this results in improved concentration on learning tasks. Most pupils make good progress in learning about geographical terms because teachers emphasise them in lessons and provide word glossaries. The marking of work generally informs pupils about the quality of work, but there are inconsistencies in the quality of the continual assessment and by accepting low quality written and map work by a minority of pupils. Teachers use resources well to support learning. The quality of books and reprographic materials is good and teachers stimulate interest through practical work and

visits. Pupils respond well and the Year 9 models of the earth's interior are high quality. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 10 and Year 11 is also good. Teachers prepare pupils very well for GCSE coursework, providing extra sessions at lunchtimes.

148. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision in each year for fieldwork; this has a good influence on pupils' attitudes to the subject and the standards that many pupils reach. The assessment of National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory because teachers do not cross-moderate standards of work. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development, but planned provision is not identified in schemes of work. The use of computers in learning is at an early stage of development but good practice was evident in work seen in Year 9. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The work of the department is well co-ordinated and staff receive good support. The development plan is linked to whole school planning and the quality of teaching is monitored through lesson observation. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching has improved, and whilst GCSE results have been below average, they reflect at least satisfactory achievement for most pupils.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, with a good focus on how pupils learn.
- Standards are rising under new management.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement

- Assessments in Years 7 to 9 are inaccurate.
- Some higher attainers could be stretched more.

149. Standards at GCSE are broadly in line with national averages both at A* to C and A* to G grades. Pupils taking history in 2000 tended to gain higher grades in history than in their other subjects. Results for 2001, however, are significantly lower than those of 2000 at the A* to C grade level. For the last two years, boys have had better A* to C results than the girls, contrary to the national pattern, and contrary to history assessments in Years 7 to 9. The disappointing results of 2001 show that some pupils, especially girls, have not achieved as well as they should have done. Nevertheless, results over time are fluctuating rather than falling.

150. Standards in work seen during the inspection are average at the ends of Years 9 and 11. Since pupils enter the school with below average history skills, this represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. Standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are lower than the teachers' own assessments indicate. This is because these assessments are insecure, based on too generous grading of insufficiently demanding tasks. Strengths in Years 7 to 9 are the pupils' knowledge and understanding, but their weakness lies in communicating what they know in their writing. Pupils are attentive and extract information accurately from text. They organise and record their knowledge accurately, and in a variety of ways such as charts and mind-maps. This works well, helping them to remember it. Where opportunities are given to develop their ideas in extended writing, more able pupils can explain events well. This was illustrated in a Year 7 pupil's essay, which gave a full account of why Harold's men were defeated in the battle of Hastings. She included not only the impact of conditions the day of the battle, but an analysis of longer term causes, such as the loss of Harold's best fighters at an earlier battle. Most written work in pupils' exercise books, however, is highly structured and requires little in the way of extended writing. This effectively addresses the needs of the majority of pupils, who enter the school with weak literacy skills. These pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. But it is constraining the progress of the minority of more able pupils. Pupils' skills in source work and interpretation are not developed well enough to provide a good foundation for GCSE.

151. The strengths of pupils' work in Year 10 and 11 are also their good knowledge and understanding, both in range and in depth. Pupils in Year 11, for example, can empathise with the cowboys' life-style in the American West, one boy describing the cowboys' saddles as their "pride and joy", others expressing the tribulations of a cowboy's life through imaginative poems. The development of pupils' history skills is satisfactory overall, but much depends on their teaching group. For example, pupils in one lesson were seen making very good progress in how to look analytically at a picture source, as a result of being taught *how* to do this, and given opportunities to practise, whereas in another class, the teacher pointed out the key points for the pupils. These latter pupils are not achieving as well as they could because they are not challenged and involved enough in lessons. In general, reading and writing skills develop adequately, and often well, but a more systematic approach by all teachers would have a greater impact on standards. Numeracy and the use of information

and communication technology are being developed, but not enough. These have been identified as priorities in the department's development plan for the current year.

152. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good on balance in Years 10 and 11, where the range is wider. All teachers have good subject knowledge and good pupil management skills. Pupils can, therefore, listen and learn effectively both from their teacher and from each other, and they do so. Most lessons have clear objectives which are shared with the pupils. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory rather than good because most teachers are not yet planning to meet the needs of all pupils, especially the higher attainers. Some do this well, as seen in a good Year 9 lesson, where the teacher set appropriately demanding homework but provided a guide sheet which was well-designed to stretch some pupils and support others. Where learning is very good, as seen in a Year 11 lesson, every pupil in the class was stretched to his or her limit, chivvied from start to finish, and the teacher's good methods, lesson planning and guidance ensured that all pupils gave of their best, producing good GCSE answers under pressure of time. Nearly all teachers focus well on promoting learning skills, but use very different methods. For example, some enthuse their pupils through a lot of participation, and help them to organise knowledge through use of mind-maps. This was seen to be effective for Year 10 pupils, trying to understand the Manchurian crisis. Other teachers focus well on written texts and writing. This was effective in another Year 10 class where pupils learned to express their knowledge and ideas from speech and short notes into sentences and paragraphs. This good focus on pupils' learning is the key to improved standards seen in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is weak, the teacher does too much for pupils with the result that their efforts flag and they lack enthusiasm.

153. Leadership and management are good. Only one year in post, the head of department has spear-headed a great deal of curriculum development, including a new GCSE course. He has the energy, optimism and commitment required to push through further improvements, most already identified in department plans. While improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall, the higher standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 shows good improvement recently. The achievement of lower attaining boys in Years 7 to 9, identified as a weakness at the last inspection, is now good. Resources are now plentiful. The use of information and communication technology has increased, but more still needs to be done. Teaching is now monitored and evaluated efficiently, but not yet fully effectively in order to make learning more evenly good across all classrooms.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good achievement for those following examination courses in Years 10 and 11.
- The pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The quality of accommodation and learning resources.

Areas for improvement

- The need to meet in full statutory requirements for the curriculum and reporting in all years, and to draw upon a full range of evidence in assessing standards..
- Build on the rising standards of pupils when they enter the school.
- Monitor more closely the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom, and the effectiveness of arrangements for delivering the subject through other departments.

154. The school's own assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show an above average proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or better, and a below average proportion at Level 6 or better. These results are not moderated externally, and are generous in the light of inspection evidence. In 2000, the results in the short course GCSE at the end of Year 11 were well below average. There was a significant improvement in 2001, when a larger number sat both the short course GCSE and Part One GNVQ, gaining average results. Analysis shows that pupils tended to gain better results than would have been expected from their Year 9 national test scores. No assessments are available for pupils who did not choose information and communication technology as an option in Years 10 and 11.

155. The school does not collect data on information and communication technology standards when pupils transfer at the end of primary school. Discussion with pupils and observations in Year 7 suggest that standards cover a wide range, but are broadly average overall. At the end of Year 9, work seen during the inspection shows standards to be below average; pupils show unsatisfactory achievement over that time, except in computer-aided design. Analysis of pupils' work stored on the school network suggests that the teacher's own assessments of standards by Year 9 are over-generous. Their standard of work in information and communication technology is little better in Year 9 than in Year 7. Pupils use a range of software packages for individual tasks, such as spreadsheets for tables and graphs or multimedia packages for presentations, but in relatively unsophisticated ways. There is little evidence of selecting, organising, structuring and refining information from different sources, or using complex lines of enquiry. There are no differences in standards or achievement between girls and boys. Pupils in Year 7 have one lesson of specialist information and communication technology teaching per fortnight; thereafter, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are expected to develop their skills through work in other subjects. This does not happen in any planned manner. Whilst the lowest attainers show some gains in basic skills, the work does little to extend middle, and especially higher, attainers.

156. Standards at the end of Year 11, as judged from work seen, are below average overall, representing unsatisfactory achievement. However, standards of work on the GNVQ course are average, with pupils demonstrating good achievement in relation to their earlier work, with no significant difference between boys and girls. Higher attaining pupils develop sophisticated relational databases from linked datasets, use a range of techniques and formulae in spreadsheets and present their work using text formatting, charts, graphics, images and Websites as appropriate. Middle attaining pupils present their work well, compare documents produced professionally with their own, and annotate work to show the facilities they have used. Standards of work for those not following the GNVQ course are below average, and

achievement is unsatisfactory. Few pupils in this group demonstrate high standards of information and communication technology in their GCSE work in other subjects. As in Years 7 to 9, there are few planned opportunities for them to develop their skills in a structured way. However, other subjects do provide opportunities for pupils to use computers. In a Year 11 science lesson, pupils used data loggers to record the temperature of a solid as it was melted and refrozen and made use of graph plotting to highlight features such as supercooling. In design and technology, pupils used CAD/CAM equipment with skill and confidence. In other subjects such as geography, English and religious education, some pupils use word processors and desktop publishing, but opportunities are often missed to use a range of appropriate software together to make the final product more polished and suitable for audience. Literacy and numeracy skills are occasionally demonstrated and are as expected in relation to pupils' prior attainments.

157. The quality of teaching and learning in discrete information and communication technology lessons is unsatisfactory in Year 7; is good overall in specialist work in Years 10 and 11, with some very good features. In Year 7, work is pitched at too low a level. Good use of learning support assistants enables low attainers and those with special educational needs to make good progress. Middle and high attainers make unsatisfactory progress as the work lacks challenge and they spend time in lesson waiting for the next activity. In Years 10 and 11, the GNVQ lessons have excellent schemes of work, and very good planning results in assignments that enable all pupils to make progress. Exposition is kept brief but focused, and teachers provide very good individual challenge and support. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils prepared a report comparing documents. Use of style formatting was simply explained and all pupils were able to incorporate style headings into their reports. More able pupils used more features of the software to produce finished reports of very high quality, selecting appropriate techniques. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were preparing Websites relevant and useful to the intended audience, drawing upon the full range of tools available. In some lessons, pace and productivity could be improved by clearer objectives and structured deadlines for the individual assignments.

158. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. A huge investment in information and communication technology hardware, software and technical support over the last few years, together with substantial new accommodation, is already having a positive impact on standards. The use of the New Opportunities Fund for training staff has given teachers confidence to use information and communication technology in their lessons. However, the school still does not comply with statutory requirements. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 the plans for delivery of units of work across the curriculum are sound. As yet, these sessions, while enabling pupils to use information and communication technology skills they already have as a tool for learning in a number of subjects, do little to develop their skills further to the required levels by Year 9. In Year 7, a discrete information and communication technology lesson once a fortnight is too infrequent for pupils to consolidate and build skills needed to make more effective use of the school's extensive network across the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, there is no information and communication technology provision for a significant minority of the pupils. A number use information and communication technology as a tool in their GCSE coursework but again, this does little to ensure further development of their skills. Curricular arrangements in all years therefore have a negative impact on standards.

159. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A development plan identifies suitable priorities, with costs, success indicators and responsibilities. Given the huge and necessary accommodation and infrastructure changes in the recent past, addressing non-compliance with the National Curriculum was deferred. This is now an urgent priority. A curriculum review is currently taking place, to be implemented next September. Accommodation and resources are very good and teaching staff are knowledgeable and suitably experienced for teaching the subject. The senior technician plans the expansion of the infrastructure using National Grid

for Learning and school funds; he ensures value for money in all purchases. Second hand equipment is made available to pupils at highly competitive rates; this assists inclusion, given the school's very diverse socio-economic profile. A recently appointed assistant and some part timers support him well. They ensure that hardware is well maintained so that the network is always available for classes and individual pupils. Progress of pupils on GNVQ courses is well monitored and they receive good feedback. However, for all other pupils, assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory. Assessments are not monitored, records are incomplete and there are no reports of progress made to parents in Years 8 to 11. Monitoring and evaluation of delivery arrangements for cross-curricular information and communication technology, and teaching in the department, are not well developed. The actions taken by the information and communication technology co-ordinator in his first two years in post have been appropriate ones. The improvement in standards for Year 11 GNVQ, the progress of the curriculum review, and the shared commitment of the staff in the department, indicate that the outstanding areas for development from the last inspection will be addressed with vigour.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The teachers' good subject knowledge and good use of French and German in the classroom.
- The use of target setting within the department.

Areas for improvement

- Speaking skills from Year 7 onwards.
- The need for greater consistency of planning, teaching and assessment.

160. The teachers' own assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show standards in French to be below average. In 2001 however they were average for those pupils attaining at least Level 5, but below average for those attaining Level 6 or above. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in 2000 showed standards in French to be average; standards in German were above average. In 2001 standards in French were below average for those attaining A* to C grade, but above average at the A* to G level. In German, standards were above average at both levels. Boys and girls tended to do significantly better in French and German than in the other subjects that they took. More detailed analyses show that achievement in both languages is satisfactory overall, but good for higher attaining boys.

161. In work seen during the inspection, standards in French at the end of Year 9 are average, as are standards in German. The pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 in both languages. Pupils increase the range of vocabulary they understand and can use. The developments of other language skills, such as the initiation and development of conversations and reading for pleasure, are less marked. All pupils can understand a range of French classroom instructions. The listening skills of some lower attaining pupils is hampered by poor concentration; higher attainers pick up on clues such as the use of a particular tense and respond correctly. Higher attaining pupils are also using the perfect tense, albeit in structured situations. The pronunciation of pupils of all abilities can sometimes be poor when reading from a book or a sheet, but it is generally satisfactory overall. There is little evidence of reading and understanding, other than of short extracts from a textbook. Most pupils can complete written activities from the textbook, and the level of accuracy of higher attaining pupils and their ability to use grammar in these exercises are good. There is little extended writing in either language. However, written work done in German by higher attaining pupils is very accurate and shows a good ability to manipulate the basics of German grammar. The accuracy level in German of other pupils is more variable.

162. In work seen during the inspection, standards in French are broadly average for the end of Year 11; in German they are above average. The pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall in both languages. The highest attaining pupils, particularly boys, show good achievement in both languages. Lower attaining pupils demonstrate satisfactory achievement in the acquisition of new vocabulary; the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Higher attainers in both languages are writing about a range of topics and using a range of structures and their accuracy level is generally high. The written work of average attainers tends to be more inaccurate, but the written work of the lower attainers has inaccuracies even in the most basic language, as in the incorrect spelling of *je m'appelle* in the work of a Year 11 pupil. When speaking, in either language, pupils are hampered by a lack of confidence and, in many cases, inadequate recall of vocabulary from previous topics. As in earlier years, listening continues to be the best developed skill. Pupils are starting to use information and communication technology at all stages to support their language learning. They use word processing and display the findings of surveys on bar and pie charts.

163. Teaching is good overall, but can be inconsistent across the department. Learning is also good. The teachers' subject knowledge is good, as is their use of the target language, increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their listening skills. The use of the target language is enhanced by good use of gesture and visuals. Teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour well and in the best lessons, there are consistent and clear expectations and appropriate use of praise. There is no consistent approach to the setting of objectives for the lesson, but there are good examples of these being written on the board and being shared with pupils. Teachers provide a range of activities. Most of these are based on the text book, but there are good examples of other activities such as games, surveys and guessing games, which teachers use to provide variety and opportunities to reinforce learning. There are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise the work orally in pairs or as a class and as a result, their spoken language can be hesitant. Good use is made of the foreign language assistant and other support staff to provide extension and support for pupils. Marking is regular and there is some good supportive marking in books in Years 10 and 11, but suggestions for improvement are not regularly written into books. When working with lower attaining pupils, teachers do not always pitch the work at the right level or provide enough support for pupils to be able to complete an activity. Pupils then find it difficult to concentrate. This was done well, in the other hand, in a Year 7 lesson where the teacher provided a range of overhead projector activities for pupils to practise the vocabulary associated with where they live. All instructions were clearly given in French, accompanied by gestures, and finally comprehension was checked. Only when pupils were secure did the teacher move on. Occasionally pupils are asked to complete activities from the text book which are not challenging enough for them. Overall, however, teachers know their pupils and their needs well. As a result, behaviour is generally good, but there are occasions when unsatisfactory behaviour, usually involving a few boys, or lack of equipment, hinder pupils from learning.

164. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are overviews for curriculum planning, but the range of textbooks in use and the variety of formats of the plans make it difficult to ensure that progress is clearly identified. There are regular tests in Years 7 to 9 marked against the National Curriculum criteria. There are not, as yet, examples of pupils' work in a portfolio which might serve to support standardisation. Neither is it yet routine to discuss with pupils in lessons how they might achieve the next level. Staff are skilled in the setting of targets based on data analysis. The head of department provides good guidance through a handbook and informal discussion. Monitoring of teaching is regular, but it has not yet led to a consistent approach across the department. Key responsibilities are well delegated.

165. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils are consistently performing better in French and German than in many other subjects. There is a sharper focus on the National Curriculum when planning and assessing, and there is good use is made of target setting.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Excellent accommodation for music making.
- Learning support assistants contribute well to work in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results have fallen.
- Assessment and the monitoring of the progress made by pupils are inadequate, leading to a lack of challenge in some cases.
- Team teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not always effective.

166. The number of pupils choosing to study music for GCSE examination has varied considerably over the last three years. Since the previous inspection, the numbers of pupils achieving grades A* to C initially remained at or above average levels. However in 2000, results fell below average, and in 2001, the number of pupils taking the examination halved and despite the small entry, results fell again. Boys and girls gain similar results.

167. The teachers' own assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 showed above average standards, with boys doing less well than girls. However standards seen in lessons indicate that these results are over generous. Standards in the current Year 9 are average; achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils arrive from their primary schools with good prior attainment. They are confident in composing and working in groups, and have an understanding of the meaning and use of musical definitions. However, apart from a small group of pupils who have instrumental lessons, the rest of pupils in Year 9 have not improved their knowledge or musical skills sufficiently. For example, a class of Year 9 pupils had poor singing skills and insufficient musical knowledge in order to complete a song-writing project adequately. However pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support given by a learning support assistant, whose musical knowledge and support ensures that these pupils participate fully and make good progress. Standards are average for the end of Year 11, and pupils make broadly satisfactory progress with GCSE work. Pupils at this level make good use of information and communication technology in order to store and refine their compositions. Good use is made of musical influences taught in class, for example from lessons about Gamelan and passacaglia form. A pupil then used them in her composition giving clear reasons for her choice.

168. The quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good teaching. Learning is broadly satisfactory. The excellent new accommodation has given opportunities for classes to be timetabled in parallel. This means that some classes for Years 7 to 9 are combined, with team teaching during the lesson. This is not always successful. The large numbers of pupils involved means that pupils are inclined to become passive and restless on occasions, with the same pupils taking responsibility for answering questions. Pupils are not always sufficiently known to staff so that questioning is not rigorously targeted or focused. Time is wasted at the start of lessons where pupils are required to copy information from the board. However during the inspection pupils often did nothing, as they did not have their books or were unable to see the written information clearly. Explanations are not sufficiently clear and noisy congested movement a feature of some

lessons. In the best lessons, usually involving a single group, pupils learn well because they are all involved in the work and are given clear tasks to undertake. Here, the teacher supports and evaluates the work so that improvements can be rehearsed before the final performance. Key words are included in lessons, but there is no planned approach in order to develop literacy within the department. The absence of structured written work means that pupils are not able to develop their written evaluation skills through short pieces of prose. Written work that is undertaken is often unfinished and unmarked. A good lesson with Year 11 pupils was successful because of the good relationship between staff and pupils. Pupils had to perform their individual and ensemble performances to their peers. Good musical playing occurred, showing an understanding of phrasing and ensemble work. The evaluation led skilfully by the teacher enabled good musical dialogue to occur with all comments valid, constructive and linked to good musical learning.

169. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive and they appreciate the opportunities that they have to use the departments' facilities at lunch times and after school. However, some pupils do not enjoy the joint teaching in Years 7 to 9. A suitable range of instrumental lessons is taught, and pupils take part in a variety of extra curricular ensembles. The potential for display is underused, with no opportunities taken to celebrate pupils' work.

170. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The management of the department is unsatisfactory, with some negative attitudes towards major curriculum issues being evident. At present, lesson planning is characterised by insufficient detail in order to develop consistently musical skills, knowledge and understanding by pupils. This means that teachers are unable to track and monitor pupils' progress, leading to inaccurate assessments of their abilities. Not all pupils are challenged appropriately to achieve their full potential. A thorough review of the schemes of work for all pupils needs to be undertaken. The department documentation is sketchy and not sufficiently detailed to show responses to whole school policies.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, leading to good learning.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is well organised.
- Very high standards are reached in team sports.
- There are excellent links with primary schools, a nearby sports college, and the local community.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated to the subject is insufficient.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning could be more systematic.
- Assessment criteria could be shared with the pupils.

171. In 2000, the teachers' own assessments were that standards at the end of Year 9 were broadly average for all pupils; they were significantly above average in 2001. In Year 11, standards reached by boys and girls in the 2001 GCSE dance examinations were broadly average for A* to C grades, continuing the upward trend from the previous year when the group comprised girls only. Results in dance are broadly in line with those which pupils gain in other subjects that they take. Approximately forty pupils achieve the Junior Sports Leaders Award annually. Both boys and girls reach very good standards in a wide variety of competitive games. School teams are consistently successful at county level. In 2000, boys were finalists in the national Under-16 Rugby Sevens competition.

172. By the end of Year 9, the standard of work seen during the inspection is average, and achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average in core physical education, the Junior Sports Leaders course and in GCSE dance; achievement in all areas at this level is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately, whilst achievement is very good for gifted and talented pupils, both in lessons and extra curricular work. By the end of Year 9, most pupils display satisfactory levels of knowledge and skill in games and gymnastics. In dance, performance of the youngest boys is below average. However, boys and girls reach above average standards when partnering one another for Rock 'n Roll in Year 9. In Years 7 to 9, the distance between specialist accommodation together with the modest lesson time of fifty minutes sometimes constrains achievement. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average in courses which pupils select, with no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls. For example in swimming, high attaining pupils understand personal survival and life saving techniques; middle and low attainers improve style and stamina through practice. Boys and girls following the Junior Sports Leaders course speak confidently when they organise and evaluate games activities. Dance choreography and performance were above average in a Year 10 examination lesson observed; written work is also above average by the end of Year 11.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 to 11. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range; they have high expectations that pupils will learn and use technical terms widely. As a team, they provide very good role models for pupils, communicating their knowledge and enthusiasm effectively. They capitalise on the assistance that learning support staff and sixth formers provide to devise sufficiently challenging tasks. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject and most co-operate sensibly to improve their work. At all levels, the numbers involved in extra-curricular sport and dance are impressive. Teaching is usually good in games and gymnastics. Thus, boys in Year 9 improve line out skills in rugby; girls in Year 7 extend sequences on apparatus. The quality of teaching and learning in dance is less consistent. An excellent lesson in Year 9 had exhilarating pace and challenge. Because the lead teacher, aided by a male colleague,

demonstrated with clarity and vigour, it encouraged very good levels of commitment from a double class of boys and girls. The performance of boys in Year 7 was unsatisfactory because of disappointing behaviour by some of them, and limitations in the teacher's organisation. In Years 10 to 11, features of the very good lessons include the teachers' grasp of National Curriculum, GCSE dance and Junior Sports Leader course requirements. Standards are also enhanced by: their efficient organisation of varied practical and theoretical work which extends pupils' knowledge and competence; relevant use of video recordings to enhance the observation and analysis aspects of the subject; good rapport. Despite good planning, less effective aspects include rushed conclusions in the restricted lesson time.

174. Leadership and management of this hard working, committed and cohesive department are good. Team teaching is a strength from which pupils benefit. Whilst this permits informal monitoring of teaching and learning, more systematic approaches are in their infancy. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9; it is very broad, balanced and relevant in Years 10 to 11. Teachers know the pupils well and record their progress regularly. To date, sharing assessment criteria with them is underdeveloped. The subject's high status in the school and local community reflects the excellent liaison with partner primary schools and a nearby sports college.

175. Since the last inspection, leadership of the subject has changed with the amicable internal promotion of a younger member of the team; improvement has been good. The good standards in physical education and competitive sport have been maintained; results in GCSE dance have improved and the number of boys following the course is rising. Accommodation for physical education and dance is now very good; the new artificial surface is a superb outdoor facility for the school and its community. The school's Sportsmark status was re-confirmed in 2000. Curriculum time allocated to the subject will need to be increased before Sportsmark Gold status can be achieved.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good from a team of specialists, committed to raising standards and the profile of the subject.
- Assessment procedures and marking are good, and target setting is well used.
- The subject makes a major contribution to the personal development of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient to permit full coverage of the agreed syllabus
- There needs to be more consistency in the department's work to develop the pupils' literacy skills.

176. No pupils were entered for a GCSE examination in 2001 or 2000. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 are above the expectations of the Cornwall Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Achievement is good. During Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about major world faiths and come to appreciate the ways in which such faiths affect daily life and practice, for example the importance of pilgrimage in both Christianity and Islam. Pupils have a basic knowledge of world religions and they recognise and use religious language in a meaningful way. They understand some of the ways in which religious symbolism is used. Higher-attaining pupils develop a good understanding of the similarities and differences between religions. Although lower-attaining pupils tend to confuse some of the details of these similarities and differences, they are developing a basic understanding of the links that exist between different religious faiths. Almost all pupils show an understanding of religious

perspectives on a range of ethical issues, for example the existence of suffering in the world. Pupils of all abilities are becoming more confident in expressing and supporting their own viewpoints. Most pupils have good skills in reflecting on questions of meaning and purpose. This was evident, for example, in a Year 7 lesson where pupils considered their views on what was wrong with the world. The department is working hard to improve literacy skills through the provision of some carefully structured activities designed to increase pupils' confidence in writing at length. There is scope to develop these strategies further.

177. Standards of work seen are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus for the end of Year 11. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because the inadequate time allocation for the subject limits the amount of work that can be undertaken, even though teachers push pupils on at a considerable pace within individual lessons. All pupils now study religious education up to Year 11, an improvement since the last inspection, and there is provision for a few of these to sit a short course examination in Year 11, provided that they attend extra lunchtime classes. However, the standards are below average because, with only one 50-minute period per fortnight, the time allocated to the subject is currently insufficient to meet statutory requirements. This means that, although teachers work hard to cover the content required by the syllabus, they are unable to cover topics in sufficient depth to enable pupils to build fully on the knowledge, understanding and skills gained in previous years.

178. The quality of teaching and of learning is good. Teachers are knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject. This means that teachers' introductions and explanations are clear with good quality questioning which builds effectively on pupils' responses, taking their learning forward at a good pace. Teachers have generally high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils are being taught to think for themselves and to consider a wide range of moral and ethical issues. These high expectations are having a positive impact on standards in the department; pupils of all abilities make clear and steady gains in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide good role models for the subject and are clearly committed to raising standards and the profile of religious education in the school. Pupils appreciate the enthusiasm with which their lessons are taught and respond with interest and generally good behaviour. Lesson introductions are used to recap work from previous lessons and so enable pupils to consolidate their understanding. Teachers are also skilled in beginning lessons with effective start-up activities which help to build pupils' self-confidence and create a positive work ethic in the classroom. This was evident, for example, in a lesson where pupils had a few minutes to consider the respective qualities desired in a partner and a spouse before spending time learning about Christian attitudes towards marriage. Marking is conscientious with comments and targets indicating where pupils have done well and where they need to direct further effort.

179. This is a well led department with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The new head of department has made a good start. Teachers work well as a team and show commitment to the subject. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; this is evident not only in lessons but also in classroom displays. Religious education is now being taught to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 although the time allocated to the subject is inadequate and therefore statutory requirements are still not fully met. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 2000, the latest year for which national comparisons are available

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	3	33	63	0	17	0.7	1.6

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	43	79	89	26	45	4.7	6.0
Chemistry	10	90	89	60	42	7.4	5.9
Biology	22	86	88	14	34	4.0	5.3
Physics	10	100	88	40	41	7.0	5.7
Design and technology	11	82	92	18	29	3.8	5.4
Business studies	47	83	91	34	30	5.2	5.3
Physical education	11	82	91	18	25	3.8	5.00
Art and design	25	100	96	40	45	6.5	6.4
Dance	1	100	92	0	50	6.0	6.5
Geography	13	92	92	69	37	7.2	5.7
History	17	94	89	53	34	7.1	5.4
English literature	27	96	96	37	36	6.2	5.9
Communication studies	11	100	93	18	30	5.5	5.4
German	10	70	92	30	41	4.0	5.9
French	6	100	91	33	39	5.7	5.7

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics, but biology and the one-year course in science and public understanding were also sampled.

In *biology*, examination results at AS and A-level are below average, but with students performing well compared with their results at GCSE. The quality of coursework is particularly high. Two lessons were observed. Teaching is good and the course is well planned.

The one-year course in *science for public understanding* has only a small number of students. One lesson was seen, and teaching was satisfactory. The students are improving their understanding of the impact of science in society, and the limitations on controlling this because of factors such as politics and population growth.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The teachers have very good subject knowledge, and are confident when explaining concepts.
- Staff and students enjoy positive and supportive relationships.
- There is good assessment and support for students.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching could sometimes cater more fully for the full ability range, and the lower attainers would benefit from in-class support.
- Teachers might sometimes teach less, so that students can take a more active part in learning.
- Developing key skills across the curriculum.

180. Standards in the mathematics A-level examination in 2000 were below average. The 2001 results were similar to those in 2000 although results have fluctuated over the past three years. The performance of male and female students is similar. Analyses show that relative to their performance in other subjects, boys tend to perform less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. In relation to their prior performance at GCSE however, achievement in mathematics is in line with expectations for male and female student alike.

181. Students in the sixth form were also entered for GCSE resit examinations, AS level mathematics and A-level further mathematics, but the numbers are too small to make any meaningful comparisons against national averages. The provision for key skills (application of number) in the sixth form is satisfactory. Success rates in the first year of tests were low, in part because of a lack of guidance from the examination board, but also low attendance rates because of timetable clashes, fortnightly lessons, which are too infrequent, and poor student motivation.

182. On the basis of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are above average, and represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the GCSE scores of the students concerned. This reflects more regular assessments and careful monitoring of underachievement in the recent past. The work covers modules in pure mathematics, statistics, mechanics and decision mathematics. Students can factorise linear

and quadratic equations but, for many students, numeracy skills are weak so that they have trouble squaring 13 in their head and use a calculator to calculate $1 - \frac{1}{2}$. Students use coordinate geometry to find the distance and gradient of a line joining two points and, in statistics, they have a good understanding of the binomial distribution and can link this to work on Pascal's triangle. In mechanics they work on force and motion and can apply their work on circular motion to consider safe speeds to drive around bends and the effect of banking on roads.

183. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge, and display confident exposition and clear explanation so that students' learning is carefully considered and thoughtfully developed. Lessons get off to a quick start. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the lesson started with an oral test on decision mathematics, which quickly focused students' attention and acted as a useful consolidation of earlier work. However, in too many lessons, there is insufficient attention given to the spread of ability and lower attaining students are required to undertake too much additional work outside of the class. Teacher talk dominates the lesson in some cases, and there is insufficient emphasis on learning so that students' thinking skills are not sufficiently encouraged. Teachers have a very good awareness of the individual strengths and weaknesses of their students. Common homework assignments are set regularly and marking is completed to a high standard using examination mark schemes. Useful and supportive comments are provided on the work and supported by model solutions. Target grades are set for all students and assignments are assessed against these targets allowing a dialogue between the students and the teacher on progress in meeting those targets. This is having a positive effect on standards in the current year groups. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are good. Students show interest and enthusiasm for their work and enjoy good humoured relationships with their teachers. Relationships with one another are positive and supportive, so that in a Year 12 lesson on cubic equations, students helped one another to use their graphical calculators in order to find the gradient of the curve. Students complete work to a high standard, although their presentation skills are variable and some work is very untidy and badly organised

184. The curriculum in the sixth form is flexible to accommodate students in different option blocks, and those wishing to take A-level further mathematics. The provision for literacy in the sixth form is satisfactory, and the department makes good use of technical vocabulary, although errors in the spelling of words such as "variance" and "semetrical" are common and reading more widely in the subject is not sufficiently encouraged. The provision for information and communications technology is satisfactory, and the department makes good use of graphical calculators so that in a Year 12 lesson students identified the maximum and minimum turning points of a cubic equation by zooming in on different areas of the graph.

185. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. Basic number skills are rehearsed in science for standard form and negative powers, although work contains a number of careless mistakes such as $12 \div 5 = 2.2$. Algebraic skills are used well in physics to determine the forces acting on a car and calculate the acceleration of electrons. Students cope well with the theory of simple harmonic motion and make good use of graphs although there is less evidence of any analysis. Good use is made of statistics in sixth form geography fieldwork where students take measurements of stream flow to calculate discharge and velocity. Students recognise the use of mathematics across the curriculum and identify the use of correlation in business education, log graphs in geography and significance testing in biology. At present, there is no consistently applied numeracy policy to provide a coherent framework to develop students' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

186. The leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. The leadership of the department ensures a clear vision and educational direction for

mathematics at this level. The head of department has a very good awareness of the strengths of department as a result of his monitoring and his analyses of assessment data and external examination results. The department has embraced the introduction of key skills energetically, and has responded well to changes at AS and A-level, as well as overcoming the difficulties raised by the lack of textbook resources for this new course. The head of department engenders a strong team spirit among his committed team of well-qualified teachers, and encourages their attendance on courses to support their continuing professional development.

187. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although A-level results have fallen below average, A-level further mathematics results remain high, and results overall are in line with expectations based on the students' prior attainments. Standards in lessons in the sixth form remain above average. The quality of teaching in mathematics remains a strength, and students' attitudes and behaviour are good. The marking of students' work has improved since the last inspection and they are well supported through diagnostic marking, model solutions and target setting which ensures that students performance is constantly monitored. The department is well placed to continue to improve and to raise standards further.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above average, and the quality of coursework is high.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and teaching is always good and often very good.
- Students have a clear picture of their targets, and how to reach them.

Areas for improvement

- Students' work could be more closely monitored, as notes are often poorly presented.
- There is no monitoring of the work of teachers in the classroom to promote best practice.

188. Students are required to achieve at least a B grade at GCSE level to take part in the AS and A-level courses in chemistry. Results at A-level in 2000 were well above average; half the students entered for the examination gained a grade A. Standards were not so high in 2001, with no A grades, but only one student failed to obtain a pass grade. Female students gained far better results than males. In relation to results at GCSE, students mostly did much better than expected. Standards in the AS assessments at the end of Year 12 were average. The average point score has remained above the national figures during the last four years, though there has been a reduction in each of the last two years. The standards of work of current students are also above average for the end of their courses. Students in Year 13 are performing well, and in general, expect to achieve at well above average levels in relation to their earlier attainments. They achieve well in lessons because of the high standard of thought expected of them, and their positive response to this. They particularly enjoy practical work, and their coursework assignments are of a very high standard. Students in Year 12 are clearly already enjoying the additional challenge posed by work at AS level. For instance, in a lesson about patterns in the properties of elements, they were required to consolidate their knowledge about electronic configuration, and then apply this to explain data on melting points, conductivity, and ionisation energy. The teacher's insistence on 'answering the question' provided a very good lesson in examination technique. Most students showed a good understanding of these patterns, but they had more difficulty in expressing their

understanding clearly and succinctly in writing. The practice during the lesson helped to improve their literacy skills. Provision for the use of information and communication technology is satisfactory; teachers are making increased use of computers in the work.

189. Teaching is very good overall; students achieve well as a result. The long-term and short-term planning of work is good; lessons are therefore purposeful with clear learning objectives. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and their questioning encourages students to think about their work. Students are not spoon fed, however; teachers are patient, leaving them time to frame their answers in order to elicit whether or not they understand. Lessons include effective summaries which consolidate key principles; in a Year 13 practical lesson, for instance, a number of students had missed a key observation, and the teacher therefore demonstrated the care needed when adding the alkali so that the formation of a precipitate is not missed. Students develop the skill of participating in discussions while making notes of the important scientific points. Their folders contain work at the appropriate level, but these are not always maintained in a condition in which they will be useful for revision. Too much independence is given to students for the presentation of their work. Their homework, answers to questions, and topic tests are, however, regularly and thoroughly marked. Teachers therefore have a sound grasp of the achievements of individual students. Very good liaison is maintained with parents to discuss progress, particularly if students begin to underachieve. Learning is very good. Students are very involved in their work, and react positively to their teachers' high expectations. In class, they respond well to any difficulties they face, whether with theory or with practical work. In a Year 12 practical lesson, they showed a very mature approach to the need for safe working procedures; they worked individually with confidence, and obtained very good results because of the increasing accuracy of their titrations. They listened carefully to prompts from their teacher, and from peers. A very good working atmosphere resulted.

190. The leadership and management of chemistry in the sixth form are very good. There is a strong commitment by the head of department to all students gaining the best possible result in external examinations. Records are well maintained, and a careful analysis is undertaken of examination results in order to overcome any weaknesses. No monitoring of teaching takes place in order to attempt to raise standards still further. Nevertheless, very good learning takes place in an atmosphere of mutual respect between teachers and students.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Results have improved markedly since the last inspection, and represent good achievement.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Good teaching makes students think about their work, and sets them clear targets.

Areas for improvement

- The range of equipment could be improved.
- Very few female students take the subject.

191. Students are required to obtain at least a grade B at GCSE level science to qualify for entry to the AS and A-level courses in physics. The average point score in the GCSE A-level examination results this summer was above average, though the proportion of students gaining grades A or B grades was lower than usual. In relation to their results at GCSE, students mostly achieve at better levels than expected. The average point score during the last four years has remained above the national average, though there has been a slight reduction in each of the last two years.

192. The standards of work seen from current students are well above average. They are achieving well in relation to predictions based on GCSE grades as a result of the effective teaching seen in lessons. This requires students to be involved in the development of the lesson and to think about the work. Because of their involvement, they ask questions as well as responding to questions from the teacher. Students are occasionally a little slow in recalling basic equations, but are able to use them well, including changing the subject, once they are available. There are occasional slips in the use of number. Students in Year 12 have successfully made the transition from GCSE science to AS level physics. They were ready for this increase in the level of thought and understanding, and are clearly enjoying the extra challenge. They contribute well to discussions, as in a lesson about the forces acting on a car. There is an increasing use of information and communication technology, and students show confidence in its application. They write fluently, and express themselves clearly in oral work in lessons.

193. Teaching is very good overall. The best features of teaching are the planning, high expectations of student involvement, good pace, and good questioning techniques. Teachers clearly have very good subject knowledge. The lesson on the movement of electrons through a cathode tube developed the calculation for their rate of acceleration across the tube. Students handled the use of standard form well, including negative indices. In one of the four lessons seen, the pace was less purposeful, but included some useful preparation for a class practical. There is insufficient oversight of the quality of work in students' folders by teachers. As a result, a number of folders are of little practical use when revising for examinations. There is scope for students to adopt a more rigorous approach to the presentation of their work. The marking of homework, questions and tests is much more thorough, and leads to regular assessments of students' progress towards their targets. However, the marks awarded for these tests are rarely related to A-level grades. Students learn well. They are attentive, and realise that they are expected to work, and that they need to if they are to succeed. They work well in groups, and listen well to their peers as well as their teacher. They recognise that the course is well planned and that their teachers have high expectations.

194. Physics in the sixth form is very well led, with a commitment to high standards. Target setting is well established, with a thorough analysis each year of students' examination

results. The quality of resources is overall satisfactory. Textbooks are good, but the department needs further equipment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers are highly qualified in the subject and have an innovative approach to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are well below average, mainly because of underachievement by male students.
- Teaching needs to take more account of the needs of lower attaining students.

195. Standards achieved in the 2000 design and technology A-level examination are below average, as are those in AS and A-level in 2001. These standards show a deterioration from those achieved in 1999. The size of the each entry for both A-level and AS groups has been less than ten students over recent years, consisting mainly of boys. Girls' standards have been above average, whilst boys' have been below. When considering the prior attainment of students in their GCSEs, higher attaining students generally perform in line with expectation but many others underachieve.

196. Standards in the work seen are below average; achievement is unsatisfactory overall. However, this reflects problems within the subject in the recent past; the most recent work is of higher standard. Higher attaining students achieve in line with expectations based on their GCSE grades. For these students, progress over time is good as they are self-reliant, possess good organisational skills and are highly committed. The remaining students show unsatisfactory achievement. The students accepted onto the course have often gained C or even D grades at GCSE in a range of related courses, varying from electronics to graphics, and many lack confidence in aspects of the design and technology course. These students fail to overcome the necessary knowledge and confidence barriers that face them in order to achieve their potential. Higher attaining students on the A-level course pay careful attention to detail, are able to work logically and are able to undertake effective research, and gather information from a range of sources in order to properly define a design project. They are able to work effectively with external organisations such as a maritime museum, or the local council, and experiment in innovative ways. They make good use of computers, often generating high quality commercially viable solutions to problems. This ensures relevance in their work to personal careers and interests. Lower attaining students fail to understand how to identify and subsequently organise the information they need. They possess good mechanical skills when working with tools and equipment in the workshops, and often exhibit good drawing skills. But their work can be superficial as they omit detail and fail to gain a full understanding of the project theme that they are working with as evidenced in project portfolios. Students show good communication skills, and use information and communication technology to good effect, often generating high quality solutions to problems. These often involve the effective use of mathematical modelling, as when designing furniture for human shapes.

197. At AS level, students develop a reasonable knowledge of the application of plastics in design projects. Higher attaining students are confident and evaluative in their approaches and increasing the depth to which they become familiar with all aspects of the design process whilst lower attaining students are unable to plan their work to match the needs of the project that they are working on. They fail to think deeply about why they adopt their chosen strategies.

198. Teaching is now satisfactory overall, as is learning. Teachers give good, knowledgeable advice to students informed by extensive personal experience and skill, which ensures that higher attaining students make informed decisions that aids their progress. These students are very positive about the course and feel that the teaching helps them to achieve high standards through the way the teacher helps them to identify challenges and then supports them effectively. A consultancy form of teaching works very well for these students. Lower attaining students in Year 12, who lack basic confidence in aspects of the subject such as manufacturing, feel that the teaching does not take into account their individual needs. A more structured input from teachers is lacking, without the clearer goals and deadlines to help them build confidence, an appropriate work ethic and an understanding of how to prioritise tasks. Some of these students become demotivated and achieve at lower levels than expected, and occasionally lose heart altogether. Teachers use new technologies, particularly computer aided design and manufacture, in an innovative manner to improve students' experiences with, and understanding of, the design process, and how industrial design and manufacture are related. Students usually receive high quality feedback to inform their development, which if they are positive about their work, is now helping them to make rapid progress.

199. The curriculum is underpinned by an appropriate and forward-looking philosophy of what a modern design and technology department should look like, which includes building effective links with other external bodies. The vision is exciting and the staff team is well qualified. Recent staffing difficulties have caused problems of management, which has affected staff morale. These have now been resolved.

200. Overall, the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection where standards for girls were in line with expectations and for boys were above. Standards for boys have shown a deterioration over recent years, although for girls they have been maintained. The impact of the teaching on lower attaining students has not been responsive to the individual needs of the students.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was business studies.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

Strengths

- The A-level results have improved in recent years
- There is very good quality assessment, ensuring that students achieve at appropriately high levels.
- Students demonstrate good and positive attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement

- Teachers could sometimes expect more of students in lessons.
- There should be more use of computers to support learning.

201. Results in the 2001 A-level examination are average. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by male and female students. The results show a progressive improvement up to 2000, but they declined in 2001. Overall, however, this is a satisfactory level of achievement for the students concerned. The 2001 AS level results are also average, with higher attaining students outperforming the national averages for grades A and B. Male students do better than females. These results represent good achievement in relation to the students' earlier GCSE scores.

202. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average. Achievement is good in relation to earlier attainments at GCSE. Students have a good foundation of knowledge of topics, and use business terms in the relevant context. In a Year 12 lesson for example, students understood terms such as fixed and variable costs and were able to undertake calculations and draw graphs to show the break-even point for product sales under varying market conditions. They have good understanding of the role of trade unions in business organisations and are aware of the factors that influence employee motivation. In studies about marketing, Year 13 students were well able to apply their knowledge about different marketing approaches to developments in the airline industry. Students make good progress in development of communication skills, with higher attaining students writing well-structured assignments and most students use number well in work on graphics and business calculations. In many instances however, students do not develop answers enough in discussion, and computers are not used enough for research. There is insufficient emphasis placed on explanations in assignment writing among average and lower attaining students.

203. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and, in more than one-third of lessons it is good. Students make good progress in gains of knowledge and understanding of topics because teachers explain issues clearly. They have good attitudes to learning and this makes a good contribution to the progress they make. Students are well supported with advice and in the assessment of work. As a result they know how well they are doing and how to improve standards. Teachers plan lessons well, building on earlier learning through discussion and written assessments. They link studies to business practice and use local expertise to develop students' understanding about business finance. This broadens the students' practical knowledge, and improves understanding about how business is financed and managed. On occasions however, the pace of progress is slow because teachers talk for long periods. As a result, students are passive and are not challenged to develop ideas fully in class discussion. Insufficient progress was made in a Year 12 class because many students did not co-operate well in group work and oral answers lacked depth in development.

204. The curriculum is good and broadened through local and regional contacts. The schemes of work however, are not customised to the school perspective; nor do they incorporate planning for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The procedures for assessing students' standards and progress are very good. Students receive regular support and guidance individually and in class and they value the help that is given. The resources for learning are satisfactory, but insufficient use is made of computers in learning.

205. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The teacher in charge provides regular support and guidance to less experienced colleagues, and this is effective in ensuring that students learn well and make good progress on the AS and A-level courses. The business studies results are carefully reviewed and objective assessment is made about the progress that students can make. This has led to improved provision in the planning of new courses and to the help and guidance that students receive.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The inspection focused on information and communications technology, both as an AVCE subject and as part of key skills work in the sixth form.

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in AVCE lessons, based on a clear understanding of course requirements.
- The provision of on-line course materials to support students.

Areas for improvement

- The need to monitor, more formally, the work of all teachers.
- Improving the ability of lower and middle attainers to write about their work.

206. The standards seen in the AVCE results in 2000 and 2001 are average, both in terms of pass rate and the grades awarded. In 2000, a group of mainly low attainers at GCSE gained markedly better results in a national pilot course than would have been expected. In 2001, the students came from a much wider range of prior attainments, and showed satisfactory achievement at all levels. Male and female students show similar levels of achievement, although there are few of the latter on the course. Standards in the key skills tests in 2001 were below average, particularly for those taking the Level 2 programme. Achievement was unsatisfactory. Retention rates on all courses are good.

207. Standards in work seen during the inspection are average for students following the AVCE course and that for key skills at Level 3. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' prior attainments at GCSE. In contrast, standards amongst Level 2 key skills students are below average, and there is significant underachievement. This is mainly caused by poor motivation and sporadic attendance. Higher attainers on the AVCE course show a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, and draw upon advanced features of software, including the on-line schemes of work, to produce sometimes elegant solutions to problems. For example, some studies of advanced spreadsheet design related very well to the needs of clients. They are able to see their work in a wider context, such as the potential dangers of relational databases in society, can write and speak fluently about what they have done, and make effective use of mathematical tools. Their portfolios of work are well organised, and are tailored to the needs of the target audience. Whilst middle

attainers also show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of work in an oral context, they write less well, and so their portfolios do not contain the depth required for higher grades. Lower attainers are able to carry out assignments in a mechanical manner, but often lack a clear understanding of why. Writing is limited to relatively brief descriptive sentences; there is little evaluative content. Students following the Level 3 key skills course show similar strengths and weaknesses to their AVCE colleagues, although in more restricted assignments. Key skills students following the Level 2 course show far less commitment to their work than those following higher level courses. Attendance at lessons is sporadic, and many of the lowest attainers, often female students, question the need for key skills work at all. However, the need is clear, as many have very poor keyboard skills, have problems in opening and saving files, or in grasping the basic features of the Windows interface. They are functioning at levels more common in the early years of primary education.

208. The quality of teaching, and of learning, is good overall. Teachers of the main courses are specialists, who have a good and detailed knowledge of the subject. This is seen to good advantage when dealing with students' questions, since these are often turned round to make students think for themselves. Probing questioning is also used to extend higher attainers, for example when designing databases. Relationships with students are relaxed yet rigorous; only occasionally is there a lack of pace in learning, particularly towards the end of a session with lower attainers. Teachers have a very detailed knowledge of the requirements of the courses that they teach. These have been incorporated into high-quality on-line course manuals, accessible from any computer in the school, so that support materials are always available, even in private study sessions. As a result, most students develop good habits of independent learning. Assignments in AVCE units are well conceived, providing both basic instruction and the opportunity to apply concepts and skills in real problems. Assignments are also used well to stretch pupils appropriately; expectations are generally high. Assessment is accurate, and makes good use of national data to set and monitor targets for individuals. Marking contains good comments that suggest how work might be improved. These strengths combine to ensure that students learn effectively; all but the lowest attainers develop good research and organisational skills. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, they relate to lower attainers on key skills courses. Lesson objectives are unclear, so that some students do not understand what is required of them. Nor do these students receive sufficient direct instruction on skills, for example seating them so that they all have a good view of projection equipment. Students respond positively to teaching; they behave well, and almost all work hard throughout the lesson. There were many examples of higher attainers helping other students; by explaining work, their own understanding also grew. Whilst there are numerous examples of students using information and communication technology to support work in other subjects, this rarely requires more than basic presentation or recording skills; design and technology offers greater challenges, however.

209. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There has been a good strategic direction to the development of courses, which has taken place in parallel with the major upgrading and extension of accommodation, hardware and software, which are now excellent. The new AVCE courses have proved popular, whether as six- or three-unit options. The school's participation in the national pilot for such courses has been invaluable. The development of key skills work has also been tackled with energy, but here, the basic skill levels of lower attainers have been over-estimated. There is now a need for more rigorous monitoring of the work of all those teaching the subject, so that the many areas of good practice can be propagated to the benefit of all students. Given the considerable development work that has gone on, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focus was on physical education and on leisure and recreation / tourism.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teachers promote high standards in all areas of work, and provide very good role models.
- Curriculum arrangements are very good, and meet the needs of a wide range of students.
- There are very good links with the wider community.

Areas for improvement

- Standards on AS and A-level courses could be higher.
- The assessment of the theory aspects of these courses.

210. Standards on entry to the sixth form are broadly average. Whilst standards in the practical aspects of the subject are above average, academic standards tend to be below average. In 2000 and 2001, A-level results were below average, although results in physical education tend to be broadly in line with those which students gain in the other subjects that they take. Male students in the school outperform females overall; in 2001, they achieved all the higher grades. In the 2001 AS level examinations, standards were broadly average. However, no student gained an A or B grade, and the trend for males to outperform females is reversed, with the latter achieving a very high proportion of the C grades. Standards in competitive sport are impressive. School teams and individuals regularly achieve success at county level in rugby, football, hockey, tennis and badminton. Male students were the Under-19 county football champions for 2000. Female students are the current Under-18 county hockey champions; they represented Cornwall in the south west regional championships in November, 2001. A few female students attend the national rugby academy. The British Sports Trust praised the standards achieved by the school's Community Sports Leaders.

211. In work seen during the inspection, standards overall are average and most students achieve satisfactorily. Students reach well above average standards in practical work by the end of Year 13. For example, in the compulsory physical education lessons observed, progress in teamwork was very good for female students in hockey and netball, and for males in football. Performance was also good in recreational activities such as badminton and self-defence. Similarly, students learning to be Community Sports Leaders had a good grasp of how to organise different leagues and competitions in sport. At AS level, students demonstrate well above average levels of skill and control when playing hockey on the artificial surface pitch. However, standards on the A-level course are below average by the end of Year 13. Whilst individuals' practical skills continue to develop well, oral work in a lesson on observation and analysis indicated that boys' and girls' recall of relevant anatomy and physiology is limited. In a theory lesson on the development of sport, standards were below average. Although note-taking and oral work were generally satisfactory, students were reluctant to raise queries or challenge their teacher. Feedback from the teacher at the start of the lesson indicated that girls reached higher standards than boys in recent homework. Scrutiny of written work in folders suggests that students are over-reliant on material provided by their teachers; they rarely acknowledge sources of information when producing extended pieces of work. The use of information communication technology for basic word-processing is adequate.

212. The quality of teaching and learning is good; it is very good in Year 13 core curriculum lessons and in AS hockey. The department provides students with very good role models through high standards of dress, personal performance and team teaching rapport. Teaching strengths include very good subject knowledge, effective organisation, and the efficient use of very good accommodation and varied learning resources. Teachers devise a very successful

programme of team games and recreational pursuits which appeals to the students' interests at this stage of their development. Thus, boys and girls respond with maturity to teachers and adult coaches in compulsory lessons on Wednesday afternoons. Community Sports Leader students are fully focused; their independence is progressing well because good teaching encourages effective development of leadership qualities, enabling those in Year 12 to assist with younger classes in the school. Whilst the teaching of examination courses is always at least good, the impact on learning in Year 13 is constrained because students struggle to remember work covered earlier in the course or apply it satisfactorily. Despite prompting from their teachers, they are reluctant to voice their opinions in theory lessons. Teachers usually mark and assess students' written work satisfactorily. To date, explicit links to equivalent A-level grades are under-developed. Thus, students are not always sufficiently aware of their progress throughout the course.

213. Leadership and management are good. The head of department co-ordinates an enthusiastic team, whose commitment to developing the subject and making full use of the very good accommodation is strong. Deployment of teachers to their individual areas of expertise promotes high standards of performance amongst students. Good management ensures that the range of compulsory, recreational and leadership courses available to sixth formers is very good; opportunities to continue with sport as members of the community are extensive. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good for non-examined courses; they are underdeveloped with AS and A-level work.

214. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. High standards in practical lessons and extra-curricular sport have been maintained. Curriculum development is underpinned by a clear rationale. Community links have been extended superbly. However, recent A-level results have slumped to below average. Work is needed, firstly to improve students' study skills and, secondly, to nurture departmental consistency with continuing assessment procedures.

Leisure and recreation / tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism / recreation is **very good**.

Strengths

- Consistent high quality teaching that leads to effective independent learning.
- Thorough and constructive evaluation of students' work
- Good relationships between students and staff

Areas for improvement

- Increase the availability of computers with access to the Internet.
- Develop resources appropriate to AVCE courses.
- Provide a base for the subject that allows the vocational dimension to be promoted.

215. To date, no students have taken the AVCE examinations. Results on the one-year Intermediate GNVQ course in Year 12 in 2001 were average. Over the previous four years, most students gained the higher levels of merit and distinction, but in 2001, results were all at pass level. However, as in previous years, in relation to prior attainment at GCSE, these were better than expected results for the students concerned, who therefore showed good achievement, particularly as it was the first year of the new style examination. Retention rates have been particularly impressive throughout the years. The standards reached by the current students in Years 12 and 13, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are well above average for both male and female students, and those few from minority ethnic groups, as well as for students with special educational needs. Students are making very

good progress in the understanding of the central ideas and concepts of each of the aspects of their chosen vocational area.

216. The quality of teaching is very good, as is learning. The teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. As a result, students work very well indeed. Lesson objectives are clearly outlined at the beginning of the lesson and students know what they are meant to do and then work very effectively. Subject content is accurate and is well planned and presented clearly. Working methods are suitable to the task and enable the students to make very good and rapid progress. Students are managed very well, and their individual learning needs are fully recognised. Students are challenged and inspired to achieve at the highest levels. All students benefit from thorough and evaluative marking of their work, which clearly shows students where they are going wrong, and what they need to do to improve their writing and to extend their knowledge. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing opportunities for independent study. As a result of these strengths, students have excellent attitudes to their work. They demonstrate high levels of application. They work quickly and efficiently, with maturity and confidence, as observed when the Intermediate students were choosing a major leisure organisation for the focus of their detailed planning for their forthcoming external assessment. Intermediate students could then identify the gaps in their knowledge on the products and services in their chosen organisation; and then they efficiently created a plan to show how they would endeavour to fill in any gaps in their knowledge. AVCE students demonstrated similar skills when they were undertaking their examination preparation. All students' files clearly indicate that all students accept responsibility for their own learning.

217. Leisure and tourism is very well managed. Teachers undertake critical reviews of students' work in order to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. Monitoring of learning is good. Teachers work together as a team and provide students with good advice about structuring their work under examination conditions.

218. Whilst accommodation is adequate, the subject does not have a set base, and all the AVCE lessons for Years 12 and 13 are spread across the school. This makes it difficult to store all the relevant resources. Resources themselves are somewhat limited. Whilst this vocational area is expanding with the successful introduction of AVCE, there was no increase in the budget for the purchase of new materials such as textbooks or teachers' guides. Currently, the school is borrowing a digital camera, and this is proving to be invaluable for students who download pictures for their assignments. The most significant additional resource needed by the department would be computers linked to the Internet.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

During the inspection, two lessons were sampled in the Early Years Care and Education NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3. There are no other courses related to health and social care. In both lessons, the teaching was excellent. Students complete the full NVQ qualification by working in the school staff nursery and by attending appropriate vocational placements for two days a week. The course is well established and has developed a very positive reputation with placement providers, employers and trainers. Students consistently achieve well at levels 2 and 3; many then progress into higher education.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and music. Lessons in theatre studies and in media studies were also sampled.

The *theatre studies* A-level results were average in 2000, but fell slightly in 2001. All students entered for the AS examination in 2001 gained pass grades. There is no group in the current Year 13. In a Year 12 lesson, the teaching was good because of good challenge and expectations. The students are still adjusting to the requirements of the course, especially in terms of participation and evaluation of each other's work.

The *media studies* A-level results were average in 2000; in 2001, standards improved. Provision is good, benefiting from careful course planning. Two lessons were observed. Standards are average and students display good attitudes. The quality of teaching is good.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Above average standards and very good achievement amongst GNVQ students.
- Above average standards in textiles.
- Excellent accommodation and resources for the sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- Students should make more creative use of information and communication technology within portfolio work.

219. Students enter the Year 12 AS course with prior experience of GCSE and most have grades above C. The GNVQ Intermediate students mostly enter with lower grades. Students currently in Year 13 are the higher attaining students from last year's AS course. Many students enter the sixth form from other local schools with broadly similar attainment.

220. The two most recent years' A-level results showed standards to be broadly average. GNVQ results in 2000 were well above average, with several distinction grades. The 2001 GNVQ Intermediate students' standards in their coursework and portfolios are similarly high, but published results show lower grades due to administrative complications; these are the subject of an appeal. The AS results in 2001 showed an average range of results. Outcomes seen in the photography course, which is part of the optional Year 12 extension studies, are of a sufficiently high quality to warrant consideration for AS level. Achievement is broadly in line with students' prior achievement except in the GNVQ courses where achievement is good.

221. Students bring to their sixth form studies significant strengths in two-dimensional skills, especially in painting and drawing. Together with the very significant strengths in textiles which girls bring from their prior work in the technology department, students' skills base is good. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average on the GNVQ Intermediate course. Here, most students' standards in all aspects of their two-dimensional work are well above average and achievement is often very good. Many in the current group are using their studies of the local Cornish environment highly effectively in their studies. Visits by local artists have also informed their recent paintings very significantly, with good landscape studies in the style of one such visitor displayed in the department. Three-dimensional studies also develop well from local visits. The AS students also use all these external opportunities well, with clay tiles incorporating embossed patterns made by fishing net, for example, forming an effective part of a ceramics project. AS level students have made a good start to their course and are learning to work independently on individual projects, developing their own styles appropriately. Students' current achievements in AS work are in line with the very wide range of their prior attainment. Year 13 students' work on the A-level course includes some very effective textiles work of a high standard. Some students here are entering both art and design and textiles A-level examinations, intending to make a career incorporating both. In general, standards in the current Year 13 in all disciplines are higher than those in recent years, with the potential to gain above average results in 2002. These standards represent good achievement for the students concerned.

222. Students are very aware of the incorporation of key skills into their art portfolios. Information and communication technology is used very effectively as a research tool and for presentation of work. More could be done on the extension of the creative use of computers to enhance this aspect of their work. Communication is well understood, with GNVQ students, for example, aware of using experiments which go wrong as opportunities to explain the processes involved in their learning. One such opportunity was seen in a student experimenting with turpentine-soaked paper as a basis for graphite drawing. The spatial aspects of mathematics remain well incorporated into all work in the sixth form through the students' continued development of representing the three-dimensional world in two-dimensional studies.

223. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers have very well developed, mature relationships with students which create a relaxed atmosphere for learning in sixth form lessons. Teachers' expectations of students are very high, both in regard to their commitment to work and of the standard of artwork they produce for portfolios. The teachers' very good knowledge of routes into further and higher education, or into art-based careers, is very helpful for students at this stage of their studies. The extremely effective one-to-one sessions, which are a key feature of art lessons, combine such advice, and help very effectively with the day-to-day assessment of students' work, and how to improve it. These sessions, also often seen outside lesson time, represent a very important method of stretching students of all abilities to their full potential. It is the teachers' own very good connections with local artists which provide the impressive range of opportunities students have for direct access to working artists and craftspeople, and which they use so effectively in their work. Teachers' encouragement to use the local environment as a source of inspiration is also highly effective in improving students' achievement.

224. The sixth form benefits very greatly from the excellent accommodation and resources now provided in the new, purpose-built block. When they work in the studios, the whole atmosphere is one of a creative workshop, with students feeling fully at ease in their access to the inspiring range of opportunities offered to them. They can thus develop mature choices about their selection of media. Because space, particularly storage space is excellent, students can also feel unconstrained in the scale of the work they do. Few students leave the courses they start. Many from all the courses progress successfully into art-based courses

in further or higher education. Management of the department for post-16 students is good, with individual monitoring of students' progress a key strength in informing them how they are getting on and where weaknesses lie. The relatively small numbers in groups make statistical comparison difficult, but the high standards in Year 13 work have been maintained since the time of the last report

Music

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, and teachers make effective use of their professional expertise.
- There is excellent accommodation for music-making.
- Students are committed to the course.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few resources to support independent study and research.
- The students' performing skills could be better.

225. Music has been recently reintroduced as a subject for study in the sixth form. The first candidates were entered for the AS examination in 2001. The current Year 12 group contains only one student who took music at Liskeard School in Year 11, the others transferring from other local schools. From the original eight candidates last year, five have continued to the full A-level in the current Year 13. Three students built effectively on their good GCSE results and have shown good achievement; satisfactory achievement was shown by the other pupils. One student has successfully achieved a grade C, having not taken the subject at GCSE. There is no significant variation in the standards attained by male and female students.

226. The observations of lessons and of students' compositions during the inspection, confirm that standards are above average, representing good achievement for the students concerned. Students have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music and demonstrate good musicianship when discussing their work. They have used their studies, and their personal musical interests, to develop their own individual styles; this is apparent in the originality of their work. An analysis of examination results and the teachers' own knowledge of students has identified the performing aspect as an area for improvement. All students use information and communication technology effectively in their work.

227. Students learn well because the teaching is good, as is learning. In the lessons seen where teaching is very good, students are inspired by the teachers' personal knowledge, which enables them to gain deep insights into particular areas of music. Teachers show good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, and they expose students to a broad and varied musical repertoire. Very good demonstrations enable students to understand musical conventions and expand their answers using musical language. In a very good lesson focusing on harmonic suspensions, the teacher enabled students to listen to, and sing, their exercises in order to understand their written work. Different musical strands were linked together to ensure that students understood their work thoroughly and made progress. In lessons, girls answer more readily than boys however both struggle on occasions to include musical language in their answers. Essays are well marked, giving detailed explanations so that students understand how to improve their work. Students often rewrite their work in order to have good revision material for examinations.

228. All the students are well motivated and enthusiastic about the music they play and study. Very good materials are provided to support the history aspects of the course. However, the

department and school libraries are not sufficiently well resourced with suitable material to enable students develop their own critical and investigative skills. This, in part, means that the higher attaining students are not extending their musical knowledge well enough to reach the highest grades.

229. The quality of management and leadership is satisfactory. However, improvements are needed to establish a method of recording assessment information, in order to monitor more closely the students' achievements. The excellent variety of music accommodation means that students are able to use practice rooms and the information and communication technology facilities in order to rehearse and refine their work. Curriculum planning is satisfactory, with scope for further development to ensure the highest possible standards are reached. Target setting, based on analysis of students' overall performance needs to be sharper in order to give clearer guidance and support. Improvement since the last inspection cannot be evaluated as the subject was not taught in the sixth form at that stage.

HUMANITIES

The focus on the inspection was on history. Work in geography and psychology was also sampled.

In *psychology*, A-level results were above average in 2000 and students performed well compared with their results at GCSE. There is a good take-up for the subject, and students show good interest and involvement in the work. Teaching is good; there is purpose and challenge in the work.

In *geography*, the A-level results in 2000 were average. Two lessons were seen; teaching was at least satisfactory in both. In one, very good teaching reflected careful planning, well organised fieldwork, and good development of numeracy and information and communication technology skills. As a result, students extended their understanding well.

History

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in Years 12 and 13.
- Teaching is very good, and uses a wide range of learning approaches.
- The department is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- None noted.

230. Standards are well above average. Students' performances in the A-level examination in 2000 were well above average. Although the percentage of students achieving the higher grades fell in 2001, this was a relatively weaker cohort who generally achieved their predicted grades. AS results in 2001 show that standards are again above average, with all students achieving a pass grade and one-third achieving the higher grades. Students achieve very well. Although their GCSE results are average at entry, they make very clear gains in their knowledge and understanding during the sixth form.

231. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work confirm that standards are well above average and achievement is very good in relation to the students' earlier performances. Standards are well above what might be expected at this early stage in the

Year 12 AS course with students progressing smoothly from GCSE, where their standards were broadly just above average. The performance of the current Year 13 A-level group is also well above average. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence to produce well-balanced and convincing arguments. This was evident, for example, in Year 12 lessons where they examined the stability of the Russian state just before the 1917 revolution. Students are able to articulate their own views with growing confidence. Year 13 students, for example, spoke fluently about their individual studies, showing a very good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis. This was done confidently, and the ensuing discussion involved a great deal of constructive criticism as well as praise. Students' written work is carefully organised and structured to support coherent conclusions based on detailed historical evidence. Teachers have very effective strategies to ensure that students develop comprehensive notes so that they can produce detailed, well-written essays. The students' use of computers is limited largely to word processing.

232. Students learn very effectively in their courses in sixth form history, and they show very good levels of progress in both thinking and in writing. This good learning results from both the well-focused, experienced teaching in the department, and from the positive attitudes students have towards their work. The quality of teaching is very good. There are many significant strengths in the teaching which have a positive impact on both students' attitudes and the quality of their learning. The teachers' confident subject expertise and high expectations of what students can achieve allow them to prepare students effectively for the demands of skills such as analysis and evaluation of historical evidence. These effective approaches are under-pinned by the organisation of the teaching. This divides lessons into those taught by a lead teacher, where the focus is on driving students' knowledge and understanding forward, and those taught by a review teacher which concentrate on consolidating, reinforcing and developing key skills such as essay planning and writing. Students and teachers alike are very positive about this approach and its impact can be clearly seen in lessons. Essay writing guidance is exemplary. The content of lessons is challenging and students are encouraged to develop their own historical viewpoints. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed towards raising standards in the subject and in maintaining its popularity as an option choice.

233. The subject benefits from strong leadership, efficient management, effective planning and a clear sense of direction shared by both the head of department and by his very experienced colleague. There were no areas for development in the last inspection report.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on English and French. In addition, lessons were sampled in English language and in German. Key skills work in communication was also sampled.

The *English language* course is a new one, so there are no A-level results to report. In the 2001 AS examination, the average point score was high. One lesson was observed and the two students present showed very good technical knowledge in their analysis of nineteenth century texts in their unit on language change. The teaching was good and showed evidence of carefully responding to the students' individual needs as a result of good assessment.

In *German*, A-level results in 2000 were below average. One Year 12 lesson was sampled. The teaching was very good and students showed good progress since GCSE. Their written work shows good progress in terms of range of style and in the ability to write at length, but contains significant grammatical errors.

Key skills (Communication) is taught in Years 12 and 13. The provision and organisation are good, benefiting from the very good leadership of the co-ordinator. During 2000-2001, the standards achieved improved to broadly average. This was achieved after a faltering start. Better knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the course and the assessment papers led to the improvement. In the two Year 12 lessons seen, teaching was good and the pupils' attitudes were also good. Although not enthused, they take a serious approach to their work. They took detailed notes on how to make a good presentation and identified contexts in which they could make a presentation. Many identified opportunities in their other examination courses, showing that they understand the cross-curricular nature of the work. Assessment is good and the requirements relating to entry levels are met. Portfolio work is well organised and monitored. The provision of only one period a fortnight is not sufficient, and impairs the continuity of the students' work.

English

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

Strengths

- The above average examination results.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- There is good use of target setting; progress is well monitored.
- Students enjoy the subject and value the support from teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Responsibility for the co-ordination of the subject needs to be formalised.
- Some students tend to be passive during lessons.
- The students need to read beyond the course requirements.

234. In the A-level examination of 2000, standards were above average. Although not as high in 1999 this was higher than in 1998. Male and female students did equally well. In relation to their GCSE results, the students did slightly better than would have been expected. In the 2001 examination, the overall standard was not as high as in 2000.

235. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are well above average and they are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. In the lessons seen they were doing well in response to good specialist teaching and high expectations. A notable strength of the highest attaining students is the depth and breadth of their essay work. They have clearly been encouraged to draw on literary criticism to inform and challenge their thinking. This was

evident in essay work on 'King Lear' and 'Othello'. These students also write very well with excellent accuracy and coherence. Students used their knowledge of technical language effectively to comment on the structure of Shakespeare's sonnets. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Their writing shows they are adjusting to the increased demand of sixth form work, especially in the structure and length of their writing. The higher attainers are clearly secure with managing complex responses such as those to questions on the relationship between Catherine and Hareton in 'Wuthering Heights'. The middle and lower attainers tended to be more emphatic in their response and were less secure in writing about any ambiguities in the relationship. This distinction was also evident in class when they discussed the narrative forms used for Lockwood and Nelly Dean. Some students also make errors in spelling, expression and vocabulary choice which lower their standards.

236. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. The teachers know the texts and the examination requirements well. This has a strong impact in both helping students understand and enjoy the texts and preparing them for assessment. High expectations are constant. In their work on the sonnets, students took turns to lead the group in the analysis of each one. They rose to this challenge and prepared thoroughly. The teacher 'swept up' any omissions and confusions to ensure there was good understanding and coverage of the key learning points. The teachers' knowledge of the cultural and historical influences on texts is also strong and enhanced understanding of Marlowe's *Edward II* and Webster's *The White Devils*. There is a tendency for some students, mainly though not exclusively middle to lower attainers, to remain passive during whole class discussion. They are not drawn into discussion frequently enough through targeted questions. Ensuring the more consistent active participation in lessons by all students is an area for improvement in a department where the teaching has many strong features. The students complete a great deal of written work through notes and essays. The marking and assessment of the work are good. Students themselves confirm that they know their targets, whether they are on course to achieve them and what they need to improve to achieve them. They also value the facility to renegotiate a target upwards after a sustained period of meeting their initial target.

237. Students learn well. They are interested in the texts and value the support they receive from the teachers. Year 13 students spoke warmly about the help they received for course work through individual support in each teacher's non-contact time. Most organise their work very well with tidily stored notes and essays. Despite the more passive elements in some lessons, they support each other by coming to lessons in a frame of mind that wants to work and concentrate. They use other sources of information well such as Web sites and the library, responding well to the research individual teachers have done to locate sources. Much as the students enjoy reading and studying their texts, however, only a few owned to having the 'reading habit' in their lives beyond the school. This is despite the very good example set by their teachers.

238. The subject is well led and managed. There is an interregnum following the arrival of the new head of department, and the overall organisation rests informally with a teacher who is already fulfilling effectively other curricular and pastoral responsibilities. Teachers are responsible for their own schemes of work. They receive effective training and are well informed about recent developments in sixth form courses.

French

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

Strengths

- The teachers' subject knowledge, in terms of both language and culture.
- The students' achievements, particularly in listening.
- The students' positive responses to the work.

Areas for improvement

- The need to improve accuracy, particularly in written work.

239. In 2000, standards at A-level were average. In 2001, there were only three candidates and this low entry makes any statistical comparison unreliable. However, the students' achievements, measured against their earlier GCSE points scores, were good. In the AS examination in 2001, two of the six candidates gained grades C and above and four grade E or below; again, the small numbers make comparisons unreliable.

240. In the current Year 13, standards in French are broadly average. Achievement is satisfactory. Students have a very good understanding of spoken French. They can understand recorded French from a video spoken at speed, and understand and respond to the teachers' equally rapid French. Their range of comprehension is broad, and encompasses topics as diverse as an analysis of the political system in France and literary analysis. Higher attaining students can also make considered contributions on a range of topics which show, in addition to developing linguistic skills, a deepened cultural understanding. Higher attaining students can also write at length on a range of themes. Their use of vocabulary and structure is broad and although their work is not error free the content is readily understandable. Occasionally, students produce written work which is marred by basic grammatical inaccuracies and anglicisms, which make the work difficult to understand. Students in Year 12 have made good progress since the GCSE examination in terms of their ability to understand rapid recorded French. They have a good receptive knowledge of grammar and their written work shows developing fluency and increased range of vocabulary. As they attempt to be more ambitious their work contains a number of grammatical inaccuracies.

241. Teaching is consistently good. The teachers' subject knowledge is good or very good, and facilitates the development of students' linguistic and cultural knowledge and understanding. Questioning is skilful, and students are challenged to think. There is good use of authentic materials such as materials from the Internet, which were used in one Year 12 lesson to support the study of a film director. Marking is very detailed on extended pieces of writing, and clear targets for improvement are set. Occasionally, teachers overestimate the skills of their students or assume a cultural knowledge they do not have. Although lesson objectives are often understood by students, they are not always made explicit. The students respond well to this good teaching. They concentrate well in lessons conducted exclusively in often complex French. They respond well to challenge. When weaknesses have been identified, they are determined to try to address them.

242. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. Curriculum planning for the sixth form is good. The transition from GCSE to the work of AS is well supported by bridging materials, which aim to build a solid grammatical basis for the work to follow. There are good extra-curricular opportunities such as the mini-assistants scheme, which allows students of French to work in French primary schools. The schemes of work identify few opportunities for the use of information and communication technology, but the department is aiming to address this with the planned for provision of a study room with on-line topical resources. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.