

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **QUEENS' SCHOOL**

Bushey

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117582

Headteacher: Mr T. James

Reporting inspector: Mr W. K. Baxendale

2928

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 188481

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Aldenham Road  
Bushey  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: WD23 2TY

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M. Joyce

Date of previous inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2928	W. Baxendale	Registered inspector	Classics (Sixth Form)	Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further
11229	M. J. Freeman	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20729	J. F. Berry	Team inspector	Biology (Sixth Form)	
3534	A. Braithwaite	Team inspector	Physical education (Sixth Form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
28178	J. Connor	Team inspector	Spanish (Sixth Form)	
12331	V. M. Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology Provision for students with English as an additional language	
3943	D. Innes	Team inspector	Physical education (Key Stage 3 and 4) Provision for students with special educational needs	
30518	M. R. Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
15051	L. Kaufmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12003	A. Marfleet	Team inspector		
31850	D. Nevens	Team inspector	Music	
6432	M. Sewter	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (Sixth Form)	
17923	M. M. Shaw	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	
30648	B. Skelton	Team inspector	English	
10895	D. Wasp	Team inspector	Religious education Equality of opportunity Politics (Sixth Form)	
4829	I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20497	V. H. Williams	Team inspector	Geography Business education (Sixth Form)	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Queens' School is an above average sized, all-attainment school educating 1426 boys and girls in the 11 to 18 age ranges. The school is very popular and each year there are more than three requests for each available place. Whilst comprehensive, local selection procedures do affect the intakes. Attainment on entry is rising slightly and it was above average in 2001. There are more boys than there are girls in each year. Few students enter the school after the start of Year 7 and few leave before the end of Year 11. Just over 5 per cent of the students are entitled to a free school meal, well below the national average. About 25 per cent come from areas of significant social deprivation. The main recommendations of the Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of students with special needs have been implemented. In the week of the inspection there were 231 students on the register of special needs plus two in the sixth form. Statements supported 27 students. The number of students with special educational needs is below average, as is the number supported by statements. There are 218 students, mainly from Asian backgrounds, who speak English as an additional language, 26 of them receive specific support as they are at early stages language acquisition. The school sets itself clear targets for minimum improvement and it has recently outstripped, by a margin, the targets agreed with the local education authority.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a school that, until last year, had performed modestly since the previous inspection, but it is now improving rapidly. The very good leadership of a new headteacher and re-organised senior leadership team provides an excellent educational direction and keeps a close eye on the school's progress: standards are rising and are above average overall. The quality of teaching and of learning is good and the new curriculum, although it has weaknesses, meets more closely the needs of all the students. Students are supported well through an excellent house structure and they are made increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards in English language and literature, religious studies, geography, history, textiles and drama are well above the school and national averages.
- The students do better in national tests for 14 year-olds and much better in GCSE examinations than their previous attainment suggests they will.
- Very good leadership and management give the school an excellent educational direction.
- The monitoring of teaching and of learning is very good.
- There is very good use of analysed data to set minimum targets to raise standards.
- The learning resource centre and careers education play excellent parts in students' education.
- Students' moral and social development and out-of-school activities are very good.
- The very good house structure gives the students very good guidance.
- Associations with the community, including private partners, are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in science are not good enough.
- Unsatisfactory provision and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in nearly all subjects impedes learning opportunities.
- Tutor time is used poorly.
- There is no specific provision for the gifted and talented, nor for a daily act of collective worship.
- Indoor facilities for physical activities for 11 to 14 year-olds are not good enough.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Although of recent date, improvements in the main school have been very good and those in the sixth form are satisfactory. The key issues relating to leadership, management and the organisation of the school day and curriculum have been successfully adopted. Standards are rising as a result. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in the provision for students with special educational needs when there were then no individual education plans. The lack of whole school provision for students considered talented or gifted is a weakness. The school has a very good capacity for further improvement, its planning already covers most of the areas of need identified in this report.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

In 2000, standards in national tests for 14 year-olds were about average in English and science and above average in mathematics. The aggregated point scores over the time since the previous inspection went down. Compared with similar schools results were well below average in English and science and about average in mathematics. Students now achieve well in lessons and results in 2001, reflecting greater rigour in the school, rose dramatically in all three subjects matching, for example much more closely in English, the very good results students obtain in GCSE and A-levels. Standards in other subjects were mainly above average.

Work inspected shows that students in Years 10 and 11 now make good progress that, in most subjects, is greater than would reasonably be predicted. In 2000, students did very well in GCSE in English language and literature, history, geography, religious studies, textiles and drama where results were well above both the school and national averages. However, average point scores were below average compared with similar schools. The main weakness was, and is, in science: results were poor in 2000 and, despite improvements in 2001, they were still well adrift of other subjects and not good enough.

The gap in attainment between boys and girls is much narrower than is the case nationally. There was some under-achievement on the part of girls up to 2000, but their average points score rose substantially in 2001. The students from an ethnic minority do well and score more highly both in point scores and in obtaining 5 or more higher grade GCSE passes than their peers. The school does best by middle and lower attainers and needs to place greater emphasis on extending the gifted and talented. The good progress is not maintained in A-levels where average point scores, despite improvements since the previous inspection, are below average.



## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are well motivated and work conscientiously in the main. They take pride in their work and enjoy being in school. Sixth formers are justifiably impatient with the poor facilities for personal and group study and social development. Their attitudes suffer as a result.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There is a good policy on behaviour that is put effectively into practice. Movement around the large site is smooth. A 'buddy' system involves sixth formers working positively with younger students. The strong house system underpins good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility both in the school and in life outside. Bullying is infrequent and the school is a harmonious community of considerable ethnic diversity.
Attendance	Good. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and the students' patterns of regular attendance, including the sixth form, reflect a clear sense of belonging. Travelling distances undermine punctuality.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Both teaching and learning are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Most significant is the fall in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching, to a very low level. A staff devised policy on teaching and learning is widely implemented and is having a clear effect upon quality. Nearly all lessons are well organised to make sure the students know what to do and what is expected of them. New teachers have brought some extra zest to teaching and some very exciting teaching and learning are found in English, religious studies and modern foreign languages. Sixth form teaching and learning are slightly better than in Years 7 to 11. They are also a little better amongst students in Years 10 and 11 than earlier, mainly because the Year 7 students have not got used to the school's way of working. Strengths are in the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Student management, planning, classroom organisation and expectations are all good so learning has a good pace and students acquire skills and knowledge well. Homework plays a good part in promoting learning and the school's excellent learning and resource centre provides teaching and learning with a very good back up. Improving use of results data is helping to set clear targets for improvement for individual students and the work of each teacher is checked carefully to measure the progress the students make. Teaching of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good, so they learn well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory. Students have a good choice of courses at GCSE and in the sixth form. Careers guidance is excellent. Students have a good range of learning opportunities through lessons and out-of-school activities. However, the curriculum for 11 to 14 year-olds does not meet the requirements for the teaching of ICT through subjects nor for indoor physical activities.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The school makes good provision for these students who make good progress in all years.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Specific, effective support for those with insufficient English to cope with the lessons helps them to make good progress. Careful analysis of examination results shows students from an ethnic minority do better, on average, than others.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school makes good provision for the personal development of students. In particular, the provision for moral development is very good, and, for social development, it is excellent.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. The school uses results and assessment data very well in its planning. It is beginning to help students set themselves targets on how to improve. The house structure provides very good guidance, helping to remove any obstacles to learning students may have.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good. Parents find that the school makes their child work hard, that good progress is made and that the school is very easy to approach. Some parents of sixth formers complain about weak communication.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school has an excellent educational direction. The senior leadership team is very effective. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the quality of middle management and to make it more accountable. Standards are rising, as a result.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. However, they have not fulfilled their legal duties in the provision of the full National Curriculum: there are gaps in ICT, indoor physical activities and collective worship requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The excellent use of data from analysed results and the regular evaluation of the quality of teaching through strong line management show clearly what the school needs to do to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Careful planning is based on the very good school development plan. Principles of best value are respected and available funds reflect the educational priorities very well. Enterprising initiatives involve private partners in extending provision.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• They like the way the school gets their child to work hard and to do his/her best.</li> <li>• They find their child is making good progress.</li> <li>• They note their child likes school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work the child has to do at home.</li> <li>• Parents like the reports, but some still think they do not have enough information on how their child is doing.</li> <li>• The students' behaviour in school.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents in most respects, although inspection evidence shows the way homework was set during the inspection was good and written work over time confirms this for most students. The information provided on how students are doing meets and exceeds all legal requirements and is good. Behaviour in school during the inspection week was also good.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form of this large comprehensive school has 245 students. Numbers in recent years have been stable but have risen slightly this year. Almost two-thirds of the students in Queens' School join the sixth form and make up the majority of its population. A further third takes up courses, mainly vocational, at the local college of further education. A few students join each year from other schools. The 16+examination results are improving and are now above the national average for higher grades (A\*-C) and most students follow A/S and A-level or GNVQ courses. A few students embark on programmes leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and on Intermediate vocational courses.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Overall this is an effective sixth form. A new leadership team has clear aims to raise standards and improve accommodation for the sixth form. Standards overall are in line with national averages, but there is variation between the subjects and average point scores are below average, indicating less progress than GCSE results suggest there should be. Students receive good support and guidance in their studies and most learn well and make good progress. The sixth form is cost effective.

**Strengths**

- Standards are particularly high in government and politics, English and religious studies and in GNVQ courses.
- Teaching is good and teachers have good specialist knowledge of their subjects.
- Careers support and guidance into and at the end of the sixth form are excellent.
- A/S, GNVQ and A-level courses meet students' interests and aspirations well.
- Students attend regularly and are perceptive about their status and needs.

**What could be improved**

- The quality of accommodation in the sixth form to promote students' independent and group study skills and to give opportunities for social development is poor.
- Students make less progress overall between GCSE and A-levels than their standards as 16 year-olds suggest they should.
- Standards in mathematics and science are too low.
- Tutor time is not used well enough to monitor the students' progress.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Too many students achieve grades that are lower than they should be and too many students are ungraded in examinations.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Standards are improving, and are in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are good and this first cohort under the new arrangements for A/S and A2 shows satisfactory progress over time. Feedback from assessment is used well in lessons and now requires further development as a value-added indicator and for the effective tracking of students over a longer period. The expectation is that standards will continue to improve.
Biology	Satisfactory. Results at A-level were below the national average in 2000. Although still below in 2001 the standards rose and one in ten students attained the top grade. In the A/S examination over a quarter of the students gained B or C grades with only one student failing. The expectation is that standards will continue to improve.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good but poor accommodation and lack of resources make the learning of skills difficult.
Business Education	Good. Teachers give good support to students in both A-level and GNVQ courses. Students show good skills in independent study and group work.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and students in Year 12 have made a sound start to their A/S course. There are no Year 13 students taking A2 courses.
Art and design	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good. Limitations imposed by the accommodation and facilities restrict the range of media used by the students.
Classics	Satisfactory. Standards match national averages closely at A-level. Satisfactory teaching and learning, but not enough use made of ICT and lessons need greater variety of activity.
Geography	Very good. Good teaching with effective planning and a range of methods leads to positive student attitudes. Students work hard and this makes a significant contribution to the good standards of learning.
History	Good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations and enable students to achieve well.
Politics	Very good. Teaching is very good and an increasing number of students take up the subject. Students participate in lessons with maturity and eloquence.
English	Very good. Large successful groups take English language and literature. Standards of teaching are good with some outstanding teaching seen. Standards achieved are very high with no failures at A-level and a high proportion achieving higher grades.
Spanish	Satisfactory. New courses are being offered in both Year 12 and 13. At the

	moment groups are small. Teaching is satisfactory.
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## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory. The information on the sixth form and that given on what higher education and training offer is very good, but tutor periods are not used well to monitor progress and targets for improvement are not systematically developed in each subject.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. A new leadership team is in place this year for the sixth form. The school has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form. There are clear plans to raise standards and the school is pressing ahead with improving weaker subjects and students' skills of independent learning.

## 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"> <li>• Students feel they are well taught and challenged in the subjects they study.</li> <li>• Students appreciate teachers' support and the way in which they are readily accessible when help is needed.</li> <li>• They receive very good help in making their choice of subjects to study in the sixth form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The way in which the school responds to student concerns and involves them in decisions about the sixth form could be improved.</li> <li>• The range of activities on offer in addition to the subjects they study, especially the social activities for the sixth form is not broad enough.</li> </ul>

Almost a quarter of all sixth form students responded to the questionnaire and inspectors talked with a large number of students about their academic work as well as more general aspects of sixth form life. A significant minority felt they were not sufficiently involved in decisions about the sixth form including the newly introduced dress code and changes to individual study arrangements. Clearly the school has not communicated sufficiently well its aims to raise standards and to improve accommodation for personal study. The school is moving quickly to address students' concerns through a sixth form council and improving the tutor programme and is actively seeking to improve sixth form accommodation.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. National tests for 11 year-olds and other widely-used assessments, administered on transfer from primary education, show the students' attainment when they start the school to be rising slightly: it was just above average in 2001. Inspection evidence from the work in Year 7 classes bears this out. The attainment of students upon whom comparisons are made against national standards in this report was slightly below average when they started as 11 year-olds. A close scrutiny of the students' examination results shows that the school has, in recent years, added value to their education by the end of Year 9 and even more so by the end of Year 11. *This statement is based upon analyses that predict what a student might be expected to do and comparing that with his or her actual performance in tests and examinations. Adding value means the students did better than predicted.* Except for GNVQ courses, the same is not the case in the sixth form where, most often, A-level students do not do as well as expected and for many the added value is negative.

2. In 2000, students' results in National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds were in line with the average of all schools nationally in English and in science and were above the average in mathematics. In mathematics, the percentage reaching higher than expected standards, at least Level 6, was well above the national average. It was close to the national average in science, but well below it in English. Since the previous inspection, the National Curriculum points scores for all three subjects decreased and were below the national rising trend of improvement. However, in this time, the pattern in mathematics was in line with the national trend, whilst that in science declined continually and that in English, although erratic, also went down. Comparisons with schools in similar contexts show well below average performance in English and science and close to average performance in mathematics.

3. As a result of the greater rigour in the school, the 2001 National Curriculum test results for 14 year-olds rose dramatically in English and gave a truer picture of the students' capabilities, reflecting more closely the regularly very good GCSE and A-level results. One half of the students reached an above average Level 6 compared with less than one-fifth in 2000. Results also rose in science and those in mathematics continued to improve. The worrying feature of mathematics is that the students do not build on this very good initial impetus and their standards by the time they take A-level are much weaker than are those in English. A period of serious mis-management in science is the main cause of the students' poor showing. This has been remedied and the 2001 results show the positive effects, although standards are still too low. At this stage, there is little difference between the standards attained by boys and girls. The girls do slightly better than do the boys in English and there is little difference in mathematics and science. Throughout, the performance of boys is much closer to that of the girls than is the case nationally.

4. The standards of 14 year-olds are above average in geography, history, music, religious studies and physical education. The students make good progress between Years 7 and 9. In design and technology, 11 year-olds arrive with very few skills, but achieve at above average rates to catch up to what is expected of them. Standards are, therefore, in line with national expectations in that subject and also in art and design and modern foreign languages. Standards are below average in ICT because the students still do not receive their full entitlement, either in ICT lessons or in the use of ICT to help their learning in other subjects.



5. Improvements occur by the time the students take their GCSE examinations in Year 11. In 2000, the proportion achieving 5 or more higher grade GCSE passes, A\*-C, was close to the national average, as was the proportion achieving 5 or more passes in the full grade range. In both cases, the improvement trend over three years was above the national one over the same time. The school's record of improvement for 5 or more, higher grade, passes is impressive over ten years. Between 1991 and 2000, there was a rise of nearly 20 per cent. In 2000, 50.9 per cent of candidates achieved 5 or more higher grades. In 2001, the figure rose to 60.5 per cent, reflecting again the greater rigour in the school.

6. There are considerable variations between subjects. The main concern is science where, in 2000, only 27 per cent of candidates achieved a higher, A\*-C, grade pass. This had a depressing effect on statistics: compared with similar schools the GCSE average points score was well below average. Masked by this were some very good results in English language and literature, history, geography, religious studies, textiles and child care. Each of these subjects produced results that were well above those anticipated from earlier tests; often it was the lower attainers who outstripped their measured potential. The lowest attainers do particularly well and demonstrate the good work of the learning support department. The school's analyses show that middle and lower attainers do better pro rata than others, indicating the need to devise means of identifying the gifted and talented and setting them challenges to raise standards. In 2001, the science results rose to 43 per cent of candidates achieving a higher, A\*-C, grade GCSE pass. This rise accounts almost fully for the rise in the percentage pass rate between 2000 and 2001. It is clear that the students have the capacity to do even better.

7. Between the national tests for 14 year-olds and GCSE examinations, the school adds considerable value to the students' education. In this period, the students achieve well and standards are rising broadly in line with the national trend of improvement. In 2000, the average GCSE points score achieved by boys was well above the average points score of boys nationally, whilst that for girls was, for the first time in 2000, below the national average for girls. There were indications of under achievement on the part of girls, but in 2001, the girls' performance improved substantially. Students from an ethnic minority achieve well above the school average point score in GCSE examinations, Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean and Indian boys doing particularly well. The school measures results very carefully and now acts rapidly upon them, setting targets for minimum improvement for students and subjects as well as the school itself. It exceeded targets agreed with the local education authority by a large margin this year and inspection evidence upholds the school's optimism that standards will now continue to rise.

8. Achievement overall is good in Years 7 to 9 and also in the period up to GCSE in English, mathematics and science. In English, the students' achievement is good. They make good progress in speaking and listening by Year 9. They develop original responses to issues and read increasingly well, evaluating what they have read conscientiously. By their GCSE year, the students have learned to plan their work well and write fluently, some at a very high level. Achievement in drama is restricted in Years 7 to 9 because of timetable arrangements that do not allow enough practice. Later the students achieve well, collaborating effectively to study current issues and develop skills around theatrical properties. Achievement in mathematics is good, as the students follow the test and examination syllabuses very closely. All mathematics procedures are exemplified by how they will appear in an examination, so achievement of techniques for passing tests is good. The weakness lies in the lack of a wider application or knowledge of how mathematics is used to help in everyday life. This has a lasting effect and is a reason why standards in the sixth form are not high enough. Achievement in science lessons is satisfactory up to Year 9, as students are brought to an appreciation of scientific approaches, such as fair testing and planning investigations. The students enjoy their practical work, yet achievement in

Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. It is, however, improving since there is a tighter control over what and how the students are doing; their work is assessed better and provides a helpful spur to improvement.

9. Achievement in other subjects is good overall. In design and technology, the students gain an understanding of designing, making and evaluating; they measure carefully and undertake appropriate research in Years 7 to 9. In the next stage their research skills are refined; they study the properties of materials, know the characteristics of different equipment and use computer-aided machinery effectively. Achievement in ICT lessons is satisfactory, but standards are below average, as there is insufficient study time allocated. In art and design, achievement is also satisfactory; younger students learn how to plan a piece of work and older ones base work well on their own and on other cultures. Achievement in geography and in history is good. In the early years, the students get a good grounding in relevant skills of research and analysis, using source materials effectively. Between 14 and 16 years of age they learn to explain physical and human geography very well and their historical writing is extensive, the best presenting different points of view. In modern foreign languages, the students gain a good understanding of the language of the classroom, answer questions and play simple roles satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. They achieve more highly in the later years, gaining a sound knowledge of the topics they study, speaking interestingly, for example, about members of their family and using different tenses in the process. In music, younger students develop good listening skills; they improve practically and are average in aspects such as notation. By the next stage, they are adept in the use of technical vocabulary and know Western classical music well, but have gaps in their knowledge of music from elsewhere. Achievement is, nonetheless, good. Between Year 7 and Year 9 students improve their physical skills and their understanding of anatomy well in physical education. Dance is particularly good. By Years 10 and 11 they develop the idea of fair play, but are genuinely competitive. Students, especially boys, achieve very well in religious studies, gaining a good understanding of Christianity in the early years, supplementing this with other major religions thereafter. Older students develop ideas of spirituality and morality and reach high standards. Students achieve well in business studies, assimilating the ideas in the topics presented to them, for instance arguing effectively, for the most part, the pros and cons of building a further superstore in a local residential area.

10. Standards of literacy are below average for a significant number of students when they enter the school. The school recognises the importance of developing students' language skills to further their educational progress. A literacy co-ordinator was appointed in the summer term. A literacy working party, with representatives from subject departments, is drawing up a literacy policy for the whole school. The school organised its first literacy summer school this year for students about to join in Year 7.

11. Examples of good practice were observed in many areas of the curriculum, but overall the provision is uneven. Fuller implementation of a school literacy policy and the further application of methods from the National Literacy Strategy will enable the school to build upon what has been achieved to date.

12. Oral skills develop well in Years 7 to 9 and students answer questions readily. Older students use Standard English confidently for formal academic discussion. The most challenging lessons in religious education and English required students to use sophisticated language to explore ideas and feelings. Reading skills, which develop well in a number of subjects, are supported by the excellent learning resource centre, which is well used for private reading and for research in ICT, history and geography. A paired reading scheme allows sixth form students to help younger readers. Good practice, designed to improve writing skill, includes displays of key words and technical terms, although teachers do not always use them when a reference would reinforce the learning. The best lessons in all

subjects contain clear guidance about the planning and organisation of assignments. Word processing skills are used effectively by students of all ages to produce attractive assignments. There is very strong emphasis in religious education on the development of extended writing. Creative writing of a high standard characterises the work of students of all ages in English and religious education. Coherent argument and well justified evaluations were characteristic of writing at GNVQ Intermediate level and it was clear that students were continuing to make good progress from their GCSE standards. A-level politics essays contained many impressive examples of critical analysis based on case studies. Marking in many subjects (notably in ICT, history, and geography) does correct students' mistakes in spelling, and less frequently errors in punctuation and grammar. Presentation of written work is good in many subjects and particularly so in geography.

13. The numeracy skills of 11-year-olds are above average, although a few students' arithmetic is weak at this age. Numerical skills develop well in mathematics and in science, where students use graphs regularly. Although there are improvements since the previous inspection, students do not transfer numeracy skills easily. For example, in design and technology, students were unable to sub-divide units of measurement. Students know when to use, and when not to use, calculators: an improvement since the previous inspection. Greater consistency in identifying opportunities to develop the skill of numeracy across the full curriculum would benefit learning.

14. The school makes good use of data provided by primary schools, results of tests taken shortly before and after entry and the concerns of parents and teachers to identify students who need extra help. The school's analyses of test scores and examination results show that students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve more highly in examinations than others with similar levels of attainment. Progress results from the school's concern for all its students and its success in raising their confidence. Last school year, Queens' awards for service to the school were made to students on the register (the awards panel was unaware of the link with special educational needs).

15. Detailed records are kept of the progress of students on the register. Reviews of the progress of those at the higher stages of the register are held at appropriate intervals and almost always attended by parents. Transition plans are established for students, aged 14, who are subsequently supported by statements to ensure provision of appropriate help at school and into the next stage of their education or training.

16. Students with English as an additional language make good progress in their knowledge and use of English, and they move up the phases of language understanding. These students achieve well, and attain good results in GCSE examinations. However, although students acquire English rapidly, many do not maintain the rate of progress that enables them to move off the register. This is an area which, if addressed, could assist in furthering these students' progress in English.

### **Sixth form**

17. Students' results at the end of their GCE A-level courses are average. Overall results have been at this average level in recent years. Results in 2000 showed the average points score to be slightly below the national average with similar unconfirmed results in 2001. However, there is noticeable variation between the subjects. Students do better with subjects that are literary based with greater numbers of A and B grades in English Literature, art and design, geography, religious studies and government and politics. In mathematics, graphical applications and biology results were below national averages. Girls do particularly well in art and design, English Literature, French and geography and slightly better than boys overall. A small group of students took GNVQ business studies advanced courses and achieved above

average results. Careful analysis by the school suggests the below average points scores are the result of students not always being appropriately placed on A-level courses. Last year the school had an extensive review of the sixth form curriculum and altered provision to cater for a wider range of attainment. GNVQ Intermediate courses in business studies and ICT are now offered. The school is making greater use of students' GCSE results to set targets for individuals. Overall standards are broadly what might be expected when students' previous attainment is taken into account. GCSE results are improving but this has yet to be evident in the sixth form. When A-levels alone are considered, the value added from the end of Year 11 is negative overall.

18. In lessons observed and in the samples of work scrutinised, standards were variable. It is noticeable that when teaching requires students to contribute, both in class and through personal study and research work, standards are above average. Greater use is made of the learning resource centre and students make more use of ICT in their work. In these subjects, students in Year 12 build quickly on their work in GCSE and make good progress even in the first few weeks of the A/S courses. Where standards in lessons and work are average and occasionally below average the work does not build sufficiently quickly on students' previous knowledge. There is too great a reliance on note taking and too little active participation by students in the lesson. Few demands are made upon students to contribute to their own learning through research and wider reading around their subject.

19. In the same way standards of students' written and oral work vary. In government and politics students discuss contemporary issues drawing on reading and research from newspapers and the media. In English, discussions develop students' ideas and points of view, leading to high standards of written work showing clear understanding of literary texts. In performing arts, students have the confidence to present their ideas through good quality dance and drama performances. A feature of these performing arts lessons is the way students are required to critically analyse their work. This leads to greater insight into their own and others performances. In some subjects, for example mathematics, students do not have the confidence to use the skills gained at GCSE to help them tackle new work. In Spanish, some students have gaps in their knowledge of vocabulary that limits oral work at a more advanced level. In physical education, students have weak note making skills and rarely use sources beyond the basic textbook.

20. All students in the sixth form not studying mathematics follow a course developing their skill of numeracy. This new course adopts an imaginative approach, encouraging independent learning and developing investigative and analytical skills. No students have yet taken the examination for this course. Whilst approaching the course in an adult manner, many students feel they will gain more when this course is linked more closely to their other subject work. This does happen in a few subjects, for example when students taking A2 history analyse census data from Russia. Even in such cases the teacher is not always in possession of sufficient knowledge of the syllabus for other courses to ensure students make optimum use of their numeracy projects. The school has not yet developed measures to ensure the development of the skills of numeracy is integrally linked to work in other sixth form courses.

21. Students' skills and use of ICT are not consistently developed through the subjects. Subjects need to plan more thoroughly to include ICT as a research tool. Students are keen to develop their skills but the lack of ready access to computers is a problem. A new, about to be opened, sixth form computer facility will improve access for all students.

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

22. This inspection confirms the overall maintenance of the standards reported at the previous one. The students' attitudes to learning are very good in the main school. They are well motivated, work hard and the parent questionnaires show how much they enjoy coming to school. Students are attentive in class, respectful to teachers, take a pride in their work and co-operate well with each other.

23. The behaviour of students is good overall. There have been just 3 permanent exclusions in the last year and the school takes a positive stance on encouraging appropriate behaviour and relationships. The well-written, comprehensive behaviour management and anti-bullying policies contribute to the overall good behaviour and general absence of bullying in the school. Students understand clearly who to approach if they do experience any bullying and there is a good, effective hierarchy of rewards and sanctions in place, contributing significantly to the good learning ethos. This is a harmonious school, where ethnic minority students feel comfortable and valued and where the students' beliefs, own values and feelings are respected and understood. Students are happy in school, at ease with each other and they show respect and care for the school environment and equipment. Despite some recent, belated improvements, such attitudes are not fully reciprocated by a system that has failed to maintain or to provide adequate accommodation to meet the needs of the growing school population. Students move around the school in a safe and generally orderly way and are respectful and helpful to adults and visitors. The 'buddies' system provides good role models and support to younger students and the very strong house structure strongly underpins and encourages good behaviour and relationships.

24. Students with special educational needs enjoy their schooling and are fully involved in the life of the school, participating fully in lessons and in out-of-school activities. Those with English as an additional language are also keen to learn and make progress. They value the support that they receive, and take a full part in out-of-school activities, for example cricket, about which many are passionate.

25. Personal development and relationships are very good and a feature of the main school. The house structure uses well organised and comprehensive student files to monitor effectively individuals' personal development, providing a good framework for students to undertake responsible tasks such as head student of house, school councillor, student governor, and to support a good range of local and national charities.

26. The good attendance and good monitoring of attendance reflect and contribute well to the positive attitudes to learning and a sense of belonging and responsibility to the school. Standards rise as an outcome. Attendance is above the national average and is improving. Both the rates of authorised and unauthorised absences are better than the national averages. Punctuality is reasonably good; there are occasional late arrivals caused usually by late buses or cross-site travel: the school is aware of these matters and has modified the school day to try to minimise losses to learning time.

### **Sixth form**

27. There are justifiable rumblings of discontent amongst sixth formers who deplore volubly the absence of study and recreational activities. Such omissions militate against personal development and the continuation of the good values developed in Years 7 to 11. The poor facilities also work against the development of the skills of independent study. Students often have to spend personal study sessions in the dining room or the common room or the learning resource centre when it is available. The common room is small and dark with insufficient work tables. Students may have to move to several different spaces during the day and cannot settle to extended periods of study. In class, students contribute well to discussions when they are challenged by teaching that stimulates their interest, then

they make reasoned and extended contributions. When the teaching is less demanding, most students remain passive and the pace of learning steady. Nonetheless, the sixth form students' attitudes to school and their studies are good. Attendance rates are high and students take an active part in the general life of the school through their contribution to house and other activities.

## **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

28. Inspection evidence corroborates parents' comments that teaching is good. Resulting from concerted planning, professional training programmes and rigorous classroom observations, the quality both of teaching and of learning is good throughout the school. There are minor differences, with teaching and learning slightly better amongst 14 to 16 year-olds than with students in the 11 to 14 age ranges. Because the students have not yet become used to the demands the school places upon them, the incidence of good teaching and learning is lower in Year 7 than in all others.

29. The good quality of teaching and learning has been accomplished against a substantial recent turnover of staff and the appointment of several inexperienced newcomers, nearly all of whom are, however, proficient, imaginative teachers bringing the advantages of youthful zest and up-to-date knowledge from initial training. A number did the practical parts of their initial training in the school and are pleased to begin their professional career in it. The students benefit from working with a teaching staff that has very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects taught. Teachers are able to provide good demonstrations, for example, in physical education lessons, also asking in-depth questions to improve students' understanding, giving effective praise and encouragement where due.

30. Lessons reflect closely the detail of the recent policy on teaching and learning. There is a big reduction in unsatisfactory teaching since the previous inspection. Of the 144 lessons evaluated in Years 7 to 11, only one was unsatisfactory. Teaching was good or better in 68 per cent of the lessons and at least very good in 27 per cent. There was just slightly more teaching of the highest calibre amongst 14 to 16 year-olds. A characteristic of teaching is that good basic teaching craft is commonplace. All teaching evaluated as good or better had a format in which the purposes of the lesson were brought clearly to the students' attention and referred to regularly as the lesson unfolded. A lesson-end resume (sometimes too hurried) then explored how well the students had learned. As a result, good learning occurred, because the students were fully aware of what was expected of them and of how they had done.

31. There is a good correlation between the quality of teaching and the subjects in which the students do best. Well over half of the teaching evaluated in religious studies, for example, was very good, as was half of that in geography. In English, a very large department with many teachers involved, the quality of teaching was also good, with three in every ten lessons very well taught and nearly nine in every ten had good teaching. Similarly, teaching in the subjects where standards are lowest had most room for improvement. Teaching was good amongst 11 to 14 year-olds in science, where the students now do well in national tests. It was satisfactory amongst 14 to 16 year-olds where standards have not yet risen so much. Less than one lesson in ten was very well taught in science. Science teaching was, therefore, satisfactory overall. Teaching in mathematics was satisfactory, but it lacked dynamism; students are prepared well for tests and examinations, so they attain above average results. However, the teaching fails, in large measure, to provide them with insights into how the mathematics they are studying is used in everyday life; students learn to perform mechanical exercises, missing out on the wider interest the subject holds for learners. Occasionally, the teacher's preparation misses the target in mathematics, some lessons may be too hard for the students or some may be too easy for certain of those in mixed attainment classes. Nonetheless, there were instances of good group work for such classes. Teaching is good in all other subjects, except business studies and ICT where it is satisfactory and classical civilisations where, for 16 year-olds, it is unsatisfactory because a very new teacher, covering maternity leave, had not benefited from recent training or study of the teaching and learning policy. Lessons had insufficient variety and made excessive demands on the concentration and knowledge of some of the students. The quality of teaching in tutor time is generally unsatisfactory, as students waste too much time in unfocused activities.

32. The best teaching has a good blend of activity, mood and pace. A very good English lesson in Year 9 let the students see the relevance of group work as a means of developing both knowledge and social competence, as the teacher recapped, during a good sequence of activities, what skills were required to get the most from group activity. Religious studies teaching typifies the frequent high expectation teachers have of the students, who respond accordingly and achieve well. Very good teaching quality lies behind the high standards attained in this subject. There is a consistent air of rigour, variety and purpose to religious studies lessons that reveal the subject's high popularity. Paired work, discussion, punchy written work, video and artefacts are all used regularly to encourage students who, in turn, learn well and enjoy the experiences; they have ample scope to pursue their interests to appropriate depth. This was typified by an excellent Year 9 lesson on the Buddha that was orchestrated with great skill by the teacher (using overhead transparencies, video and paired tasks) and listened to with rapt attention by the students, who also showed admirable sensitivity in discussion. The best modern foreign languages teaching also uses very imaginative techniques and resources such as puppets, talking tunnels, battleship games and chorus work.

33. The students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good. Homework adds substantially to this. It is set regularly and, in most cases is built well into the lesson, so becoming an obvious extension to it. Teaching overall makes sure the students put in good intellectual, creative and physical effort and that the productivity of their work and its pace are also good. Their knowledge of how well they are doing is satisfactory and the school is putting increasing effort into making sure that they know what to do to improve. However, in a number of subjects there is still some mismatch, as for instance the students are not made sufficiently aware of the levels of their work against national criteria. The quality of on-going assessment is otherwise satisfactory, books are corrected regularly and testing is thorough. Teachers' planning is generally good, as are the teaching methods used, reflecting the overall quality of teaching and learning.

34. Generally, across all subjects, the management of students is good. Appropriate predictions are a feature of the good learning that takes place in both science and design and technology. Now above average standards for 14 year-olds in science are promoted by teaching that explains scientific approaches carefully right from the start. As a result, Year 7 students often make well thought out suggestions, helping the teacher to come up with, for example, what might constitute fair testing. Step-by-step approaches and good analogies help learning in geography, another subject in which the students' aspirations to do well are high.

35. Independence in learning suffers from the under-use of ICT. This is a general weakness. The concern pervades all subjects and the school has not managed to create a broad enough culture of using computers as tools for learning. In subjects such as geography, where computers are sometimes used, the students' interest is not universal. In this respect, learning is immature, through to and including the sixth form. This is a key issue for improvement. The teaching of other basic skills in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, but the absence of a clearly defined policy undermines full application across all subjects. There are good examples in music, art and design and history where, for example, key words and wall displays help the students to gain confidence in using technical vocabulary. Such work assists all students including those with special educational needs who, when they are available, benefit greatly from the effective presence of learning support assistants operating in tandem with the teachers. As well as good use of support staff, there is similar use of time and of available resources, particularly the excellent learning resource centre.

36. No subject reported teaching that favoured unduly either boys or girls, although work to interest boys is prominent in English. Teachers are provided with summary statements of students' difficulties and the learning objectives identified for individuals in the education plans of those with special educational needs. Appropriate targets are set. Mostly, these are of good quality, being short term, precise and measurable. However, because so many are new to the school, not all teachers yet understand how they might best help individual students to learn. The time between reviews is often too great and targets do not always reflect the students' learning needs closely enough.

37. The quality of teaching of students with English as an additional language is very good. Well-planned lessons provide opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing. A variety of activities keeps students working and the rapid pace ensures that no time is wasted. Questioning is targeted at students' understanding. Support within lessons is very effective, with students' specific needs targeted. Withdrawal from class is rarely used and only when students' needs are best met by small group work.

### **Sixth form**

38. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Teaching was good or better in 71 per cent of the lessons and very good or better in 32 per cent. Of the 72 lessons evaluated, two were unsatisfactorily taught. In the one case, the teacher took too much time presenting information and gave too little opportunity for students to contribute and in the other; the teacher's inexperience led to the needs of individuals not being met. Poor facilities for independent learning are, however, a disincentive, as students have insufficient regularly-available space in which to conduct research or to read more widely around their lessons.



39. The new teaching and learning policy shows to good effect in the way in which teachers consistently review previous work before setting out the purpose of the current lesson. Then key points are revisited at the end of the lesson to reinforce learning. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a clear structure that builds a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding in the subjects studied. In design and technology, teachers used their very good subject knowledge to extend students' understanding of current manufacturing processes. In geography, teachers draw on their expertise to provide a wide range of up-to-date extra material that engages students' interest. Through their knowledge and enthusiasm for literature, English teachers share their enjoyment with students, as they challenge them to explore their own ideas.

40. The strengths of good and very good teaching emerge clearly in some subjects. Enthusiasm and high expectation frequently show in the quality of class discussion. These are carefully prepared, often with paired discussion beforehand, so that students bring to these discussions clear ideas and points of view. The teacher then skilfully involves all in the group with praise and encouragement. The discussions have academic rigour and mature participation. This is particularly a feature of government and politics, religious studies, design and technology, English and art and design lessons. Students clearly move on. However, in many lessons, which are otherwise satisfactory, this brisk pace of learning is absent. Teachers may spend too long on transmitting information through notes and students are not actively involved in the lesson. This is the case in some mathematics, science and physical education lessons. Often in these lessons, too limited a range of methods is planned to stimulate and capture students' interest. They are not required to research and think for themselves or to offer ideas and opinions. Whilst overall, the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory, too little attention is paid to encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning. Nor is this independence fostered through planned use of the excellent, but often over-crowded, learning resource centre and of ICT. The link between teaching and learning emerges clearly. When students are challenged and their interests captured, Queens' students respond readily and give time and effort to their studies and achieve high grades. Where this is not the case they are passive recipients of information.

41. Homework is generally well used to extend learning. Students' work is carefully marked and help given with how a piece of work might be improved. Some subjects are beginning to set individual targets to help students focus very specifically on what they should do to improve and then checking these targets are being achieved. This is, however, not consistent across subjects.

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

42. The curriculum was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. A key issue was its breadth for Years 7 to 11, time spent in class was too short, the provision of ICT for 11 to 14 year-olds was unsatisfactory and arrangements for personal and social and religious education had deficiencies. Last year the new senior leadership team set up a thorough review to tackle these issues and to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all students. Good progress has been made. From September 2001 the length and pattern of the school day has been changed to increase time in class. The curriculum provides students with good opportunities for learning through a wide range of courses and activities that meet their aptitudes and aspirations and support their personal development. The introduction of these changes has been well thought through and continues to be monitored by the school.

43. All 11 to 14 year-old students now follow a better-balanced curriculum, but provision is still unsatisfactory. The curriculum for 11 to 14 year-olds does not yet meet statutory

requirements. Accommodation deficiencies mean that students' entitlement to physical activities indoors cannot be fully met. This year the school has increased the time for ICT in Years 8 and 9. This is taught in rotation with drama and personal and social education. This is an improvement since the previous inspection; however, the provision remains unsatisfactory because subjects of the curriculum fail to use ICT sufficiently in their work. There is an improving range of subjects for 14 to 16 year-olds. This year GNVQ courses have been introduced in ICT at foundation and intermediate level. More able linguists can take a one-year GCSE course in Spanish, but more could be provided for students in Years 10 and 11 for whom a full range of GCSE might be inappropriate. For a very few students the school has alternative curriculum arrangements with local colleges. The statutory requirements for the provision of religious education are met across the school, but those for a daily act of collective worship are not, so provision in this respect is unsatisfactory.

44. Provision for students with special education needs is good. Some students below Year 10 are withdrawn for specialist help but all possible effort is made to avoid loss of contact with work being done by the rest of the class. Two Year 13 students with particular needs are given good support. Once necessary training has been completed, the school will introduce computerised individual learning programmes to improve levels of literacy and numeracy for students with particular difficulties.

45. The school has not established criteria for the identification of its most gifted and talented students, so no judgement can be made of the outcomes of the provision made specifically for them.

46. The school provides equal access and opportunity for all its students, including students who have English as an additional language. Public examination results are monitored in terms of gender and ethnicity. There is a full and comprehensive equal opportunities policy that is devolved successfully through subjects and monitored well by the governing body and teacher with responsibility for this aspect. The school places great emphasis on the principle of inclusivity for all its students.

47. A comprehensive programme of personal and social education is provided. This incorporates sex, drugs, careers and health education. The programme is well organised by a specialist team and the use of outside health agencies and a range of other speakers. This programme is well co-ordinated across the school to ensure students receive a coherent and comprehensive experience that supports their personal development. This is a further improvement of this provision since the previous inspection.

48. Work-related education is very good. The careers education and guidance programme is excellent. Starting in Year 8, the students follow a comprehensive and well-planned programme of careers education. Very good use is made of ICT and the learning resource centre in this programme. The activities involved are interesting and stimulate students to consider a wide range of possible employment activities. Work experience is a feature of the programme, although difficulties beyond the school meant the cancellation of the programme last year. There are excellent links with the local careers service.

49. There is very good programme of out-of-school activities to support classroom learning. It includes visits, after schools clubs, music and drama productions. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is well supported by students. A homework club that fulfils a useful and well-appreciated function is popular with the students. The proportion of students taking advantage of these after school activities has increased this year with the introduction of the new school day. As befits a school seeking sports college status, there is a good variety of competitive sports and school teams. Participation helps students to develop self-

confidence, enjoyment in learning and to develop valuable skills of management and co-operation. Activities provide a welcome enrichment to the learning experiences of the students and a broadening of their education generally. Particularly high standards are found in Friday debates where matters of moment receive often-heated attention, showing the school is not afraid, for example, to criticise itself or governmental organisations.

50. Links and liaison with the local primary and further education colleges are very good. These enhance the academic and personal development of students. The drive towards sports college status is proving productive in involving the school even more closely with its local business community, particularly through the development of the school facilities. Very good associations with private partners are, for example, about to help to improve facilities for ICT and physical activities.

51. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to students' spiritual development. Important issues were raised in the previous inspection report on the need to provide a daily act of collective worship and more time for religious studies. The latter provision has now been extended and meets statutory requirements in full. There is a full programme of year group and house assemblies but these rarely provide an element of spirituality or time for reflection. Form tutor times are mainly used for social and administrative purposes. Within the curriculum, the spiritual development of students is fostered particularly well in religious studies, where students are given ample scope to explore ideas and feelings. In this respect, the department has recently won a national award for its provision. Opportunities for spiritual development are also provided in English, dance and performing arts. In other curriculum areas, however, this important area of school life is less well developed.

52. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of students. There is a very strong sense of shared purpose and respect throughout the school and firm but fair disciplinary procedures are in place to help students distinguish right from wrong. An effective system of merit awards is used to celebrate student achievement and a very successful presentation evening has been initiated to reinforce such success. Issues of bullying are dealt with swiftly and both teachers and sixth form students provide very good role models throughout the school. A notable feature of this shared moral purpose is that a student charter has been drawn up by students themselves through the school council. There are many initiatives to promote moral development throughout the school; for example, students are encouraged to become involved in charity initiatives through their house system and there is a weekly school debate that often encompasses issues of morality and social concern. Moral issues are also prominent in subject areas, especially in the personal and social education programme, and in religious studies, geography, English, and science. In history, there are very strong links with the Holocaust Education Trust and two Year 13 students have visited Auschwitz and spoken in a sixth form assembly about their experiences.

53. The provision for social development is excellent. The house and school council system is a highly effective channel of communication between staff and students and the vertical house system itself is used very well to form social bonds between all age groups. Sixth form students, in particular, are a strength to the school. They act as "buddies" for younger students and help with paired reading schemes. In this context, the school has recently been chosen as a pilot for the county peer-mentoring project. Year 7 students attend a residential course to enhance their social development. Relationships throughout the campus are excellent and the school provides a very safe and harmonious atmosphere for all students. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility through the house and school council system, through the newly-formed prefect system, and through such initiatives as the Playing for Success project with the local professional football club. There are also numerous lunchtime and after school activities to enhance the social development of students, including an activities week in the summer term. Opportunities for social growth are

also provided in most subject areas, where there is an emphasis on group work and student participation in lessons. Prominent among these are personal and social education, religious studies, English, science, history, geography and ICT.

54. Provision for the cultural development of students is good. There is a very strong programme of visits, exchanges, visitors to the school and other activities to widen the horizons of students, particularly in modern foreign languages, religious studies, English and geography. Cultural awareness is also fostered through various clubs, such as sports clubs, art clubs, music competitions and drama productions. The house system is prominent in encouraging these activities. Other opportunities for cultural development are provided by talent shows, language festivals, a weekly debating group and a commendable monthly book evening for parents, students, staff and governors. In the mainstream curriculum, cultural development is fostered particularly well in English, science, modern foreign languages, music and art and design. There are also some opportunities for students to celebrate the cultural diversity of British society and that of the wider world, especially in religious studies, which has a very strong emphasis on multi-faith issues. It is also fostered well in English, history and geography. This area of cultural provision is, however, less well developed in other subject areas, and, in terms of display work, throughout the school campus.

55. Overall, the school makes good provision for the personal development of students and this is particularly strong in moral and social areas of school life. However, this provision is not monitored closely at a whole school level and opportunities are missed to build upon the very good practice in some departments.

### **Sixth form**

56. The sixth form offers a wide range of courses at A/S and A2 levels. There is a good choice of traditional and newer subjects such as government and politics and law. Vocational courses are provided in business, leisure and tourism and ICT. Students also follow a well-planned programme of complimentary studies. This includes provision for the teaching of key skills of numeracy and communication. The personal and social education programme is taught by a team of specialists and includes imaginative material to help students develop team building and communication skills. All students follow a programme of religious education and of physical education. The excellent careers advice in Year 11 ensures students have information to help them make informed choices about their future. Very good links with the local college of further education ensure all students have complete information about the local education provision post 16. At key points throughout the sixth form students are given good guidance and support as they make choices about study opportunities in higher education, future careers and employment.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

57. The previous inspection remarked upon the good welfare and support given to the students. Support and welfare have since been refined and are now very good. They are now real strengths of the school. The excellent house structure is the bedrock of the pastoral care and the academic and personal development of the students. It fosters loyalty and a clear sense of belonging at the same time helping to overcome the inconveniences caused by the split site. It encourages and is the vehicle for inter-house competition and provides a secure and friendly pastoral base in which the students feel at ease and happy. House assemblies and the school council buttress the feeling that this, despite its size, is a family school, where students are valued and cared for very well. The school pays very good attention to monitoring and supporting the students' personal and academic developments through a well-structured and informative student file system in each house. There is excellent careers education and higher education entrance is well organised and very effective.

58. Child protection procedures are efficiently organised and fully in place. Child protection basic training has been extended to many of the staff. There is good and full engagement with appropriate local external support agencies, including the multi-ethnic curriculum service. Support for students with special educational needs is also very good.

59. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good and well organised. There is good use of the education welfare officer who visits regularly and monitors attendance records. Following a clear and well-designed attendance policy, registers comply with statutory requirements. They are marked promptly and accurately and are monitored regularly by heads of house and by the general office staff.

60. Health and welfare arrangements are very good. They are well organised and comprehensive, the school matron and visiting nurse, for instance, providing good first aid and appropriate health advice to the students. The use of sixth formers to provide a 'buddy' system to support and help younger students is very good and the imminent institution of a prefect system complements the peer monitoring arrangements in the school. Interviewed students in every year found the support they received to be of a high order. The school has very good systems in place to eliminate bullying and racism, as well as other oppressive behaviour. Students feel safe and secure in the school, despite a very busy road splitting the site. First aid and fire safety are both given a high priority and risk assessments are carried out appropriately. Each of the very good support systems in place contributes significantly to the well-being and happiness of the students which, in turn, has a beneficial effect upon learning and standards.

61. Assessment of students' work and progress is good. The way in which the school collects and uses data to guide its planning has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now very good. The school assembles a comprehensive bank of data when students enter the school and adds to this as they move through. The procedures for collecting and recording this data are good. Analysis of this data gives teachers a good picture of how individual students are progressing within the school and against National Curriculum criteria. The results of this system are circulated to departments and teachers so they can measure and judge performance. This data is also used when line managers review subject performances with heads of department and when considering the grouping of pupils. In English, for example, extra revision classes are arranged for borderline pupils identified through assessment data.

62. The arrangements the school makes to assess students' work and progress within subjects are mainly good and also have improved since the previous inspection. Day-to-day assessment and marking are good and students feel they know how well they are doing and

what to do to improve their work. However, there are still inconsistencies in the way subjects assess and record progress, particularly at key points such as the end of Year 9. In many subjects these assessments are accurate and carefully recorded and form a significant element in the overall tracking of progress. In mathematics, for example, regular testing provides high quality information on progress. In other subjects, arrangements for assessment are unsatisfactory. In history in Years 7 to 9, assessment does not enable teachers to judge the performance of students accurately against National Curriculum criteria. In ICT assessment is not secure, as insufficient work has been kept and students cannot always readily talk about what they can do. Assessment remains an area for improvement in modern foreign languages.

63. The school is beginning to place greater emphasis on assessments to set individual targets with students to encourage them to improve and suitable staff training is envisaged. The ideas for targets are often too general and students do not have a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to improve. This inconsistency currently limits the overall impact of target setting on raising attainment. The largely unproductive use of tutor time means that chances to monitor students' progress are missed.

64. On entry to the school, students with English as an additional language are assessed in order to determine their specific needs. Also assessed are other students within the school about whom teachers are concerned. Those students with English as an additional language say the school provides a welcoming environment for them in the learning support area. They use this facility when necessary to receive help and support.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

65. The assessment of students' work in the sixth form is satisfactory. Within the subjects regular assessments of work are made and judged against examination requirements. Teachers make helpful comments about the work and what should be done to improve. Students report that marking is helpful and teachers are always available for consultation about their work and reports are helpful. Assessment portfolios of vocational work are comprehensive and well presented. Overall, students feel they have a clear picture of their current performance. They are not so clear about any targets they may have been set about their future performance or targets that are based on identification of their strengths and weaknesses to help them improve. This process is not systematically developed through the subjects.

### ***Advice, support and guidance***

66. The tutorial system is in transition; the school is reviewing tutor support having identified it as a priority. The good sixth form co-ordinator, new in post, is building a more cohesive tutorial team with regular meetings and an agenda for more effective use of tutorial time. During the inspection, tutorial sessions were used mainly for administrative matters. Students report they have access to advice and personal support from teachers in the school often through their continuing involvement in the house system. Careers guidance is of a high quality. A wide range of information is offered before entry to the sixth form, including information about other schools and colleges. Students receive relevant information and advice about higher education and employment at key points during their time in the sixth form. In addition, there is easy access to an excellent careers library and computer software to help in making choices. Students with special education needs are given very good support in the sixth form.

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

67. The previous inspection reported that partnership with the parents was strong. This is still the case: it is good overall. Parents are generally supportive and subscribe to a well-written home-school agreement.

68. The school pays good attention to the parents' complaints and suggestions and deals with such matters swiftly, showing respect towards parents and being readily accessible to them. Contact with parents of students with special educational needs is good and helpful. Parents of students with English as an additional language provide good support for their children, and want them to do well.

69. The standard of communication with parents is high and well thought out. Care is taken to produce an informative, well-presented prospectus, clear, succinct newsletters to parents and helpful information in annual reports on their child's progress. The good quality reports won high acclaim from the parents during the parents' meeting and in extra comments on questionnaires. However, the parents' meeting showed some mis-handling of the alterations to the sixth form dress code and some parents did not like the measures taken to avoid disturbances when students were dismissed to begin study leave. The annual report of the governing body to parents is well produced, clear and informative, meeting statutory requirements fully. Governors' annual meetings with the parents attract enough participants to make them worthwhile. The annual meetings between the parents and teachers are very well attended; they are constructive and appreciated by the parents.

70. Parents are involved with their child's homework and, although not fully effective, most use the helpful homework planner as a vehicle of communication and as a monitoring device. The much-valued Queens' association is well supported and raises substantial amounts for specific projects and the school fund. A few parents help in school on a regular basis, for example in the school's excellent learning and resources centre.

71. Students view the sixth form provision for learning and social development as unsatisfactory. They are fully justified in so doing, as they have no guaranteed place in which to work individually or to hold group discussions. The creation of better accommodation for these purposes is the main key issue of this report. Sixth form students also find the former management's way of passing on decisions about matters such as the dress code to have been unsatisfactory. This has substance, but the new management has begun to create a more open forum that is intended to improve communication.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

72. Found wanting at the previous inspection, leadership and management have improved very substantially: they are now very good. Providing very strong leadership, a new headteacher appointed one year ago has given the school an excellent educational direction. Rigour, energy, challenge and greater democracy characterise leadership's effective ways of making improvements. Management systems now inter-lock more effectively and are all geared to raising standards. Recent improvements include an extension of the senior leadership team to five that has, in combination, a very large range of skills: each member has a clear set of duties that are monitored well. Although still not fully satisfactory, improvement to the way science is managed exemplifies the effective steps taken to sharpen middle management generally; work still also needs to be done in ICT and history. The use of analysed data as a basis for raising standards has been further refined and extended; this, and a good teaching and learning policy, worked out with the staff, are having a clear impact on students' achievement. An urgent curriculum review has led to improving provision for 14 to 16 year-old students and particularly those in the sixth form because the subjects now

offered meet more closely the needs of the whole student body. Outcomes of these initiatives are an immediate and substantial rise in National Curriculum and GCSE test and examination results in 2001 compared with previous years. Owing largely to the modified curriculum, inspection findings also show that standards in Year 12 are higher than are those in Year 13. Raised expectations have led to the school making excellent progress in not only meeting but, for example, exceeding by 8 per cent its agreed GCSE targets. Current practice demonstrates clearly that the school is well able to evaluate its own performance. Helping to set up a county-wide initiative to improve leadership and management in schools is a good example of the strides taken since the previous inspection.

73. The school has retained its best features such as the excellent house structure. House membership is the mainstay for the promotion of the students' very good attitudes and values, reflecting the school's aims of effective learning, self-awareness and consideration for others. A clear example of its success is the general harmony that pervades a school with students from homes in which the first language spoken is one of twenty-four different ones. An equal opportunity policy is very well supported by good practice in the interpretation of the fully implemented teaching and learning and positive behaviour policies, all drawn up by the staff. The school's practices are very well directed towards social inclusion, the main weakness being the buildings that deny access to what it has to offer to those with mobility problems. The work of the learning support unit benefits from very good leadership and the strength of teamwork to which all the specialist staff contribute. Support for students with English as an additional language is also well managed. There is a clear rationale, targeting those with greatest need, to the allocation of support. A reference sheet, which matches and explains the categories of language acquisition with suggested strategies, provides good support for teachers.

74. The governing body has very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, being particularly active in fostering recent improvements and enjoying the innovations of greater democracy, for instance receiving papers, including the headteacher's report, before scheduled meetings. The governors support the school strongly, not only in its immediate work to improve standards and the curriculum, but also in its growing inter-action with the wider community that has the same intent. Whilst their role in shaping the school's direction is satisfactory, their fulfilment of statutory duties is weaker, as provision in ICT, indoor physical activities and for a daily act of collective worship do not meet requirements.

75. A governor-approved line management structure starting from the senior leadership team has, in its two terms of operation, become increasingly effective in working with other managers to set minimum performance levels and to monitor these closely. Increasing sophistication is leading to a much closer scrutiny of individual performance by full analysis of examination residuals. The application of this information not only records students' performance and measures value added to it, but also matches the data to individual classes and their teachers as a means of identifying professional development needs or disseminating good practice. A very good example of this was seen in a line-management meeting with the head of religious studies; it recognised the high standards achieved and sought to spread the reasons for this among all members of the department. It also improved the managerial role of the subject head, as she was to work out need with her colleagues from the information now held. At present, there is no mechanism for spreading the much good practice from one subject to the rest. Nonetheless, the staff is now pulling very well together and inspection indications suggest that, as a result, standards will continue to rise.

76. The leadership and management both of subjects and of houses are good. Weaknesses in the management of science and ICT are historic and are under review. Except for history, which had no plan, middle managers have modelled development planning on the succinct one devised for the school as a whole. They adapt its key areas to their



needs, particularly teaching's use of ICT, assessment and study skills; raising expectations all round; increasing accountability and widening partnerships with parents and the community. There are clear signs the school is making good, concerted headway towards these goals.

77. The school's practices in appraisal and performance management are good. The principal weakness is that most job descriptions are out of date. However, systematic observation and review of teaching and the curriculum are at the heart of rising standards. Middle managers, in collaboration with the senior leadership team, now monitor teaching and analyse work very well, so that all staff have a sound basis for professional development and improvement. Annual interviews between the headteacher and members of staff complement this support and the school's provision for staff debate on professional issues is also very good. Newly-qualified teachers, for example, have regular discussions on matters of concern such as the use of tutor time and positive behaviour management. There is a very good coherence in the way the school is pulling together. The school has a very good capacity to continue to improve.

78. The school is adequately staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. The school has ensured the science department is fully staffed with specialists and is using the Graduate Teacher Programme for this purpose. There has been a significant turn over of staff in the last two years and the school now has a good balance of experienced and newly qualified staff. There are good arrangements for the induction of staff who are new to the school or to the teaching profession. Arrangements for the performance management of staff are very good and meet statutory requirements. Professional development planning is linked to priorities identified by the school and departments. The effectiveness of training is not yet evaluated, for example whether ICT training has resulted in greater use across the curriculum.

79. Learning resources are unsatisfactory overall, but there are substantial variations in provision. Resources for learning mathematics, politics and history, for instance, are plentiful, whilst there are deficiencies in ICT and in design and technology where provision for graphics, for example, is poor.

80. The school's major learning resource is the very-well used learning resource centre that is well stocked with both fiction and non-fiction suited to the interests and needs of all students including those with restricted reading skills. Such is the quality and popularity of the centre that it cannot satisfy demand, causing some frustration to students who are unable to gain access at busy times. Its work does, however, make a significant and lasting impact on learning in the school and is one of its real strengths. Organised and managed to high professional standards by a chartered librarian and her staff, the centre is fully computerised and is particularly attractively presented. As well as the very good range of printed resources, there is similar provision in media resources, including frequently used Internet access. The centre is well integrated into the academic life of the school and students receive good, well-structured training in basic library information skills, topic research and valuable independent learning skills.

81. Set in very attractive and extensive grounds, the accommodation has the considerable advantage of an apparent rural setting. However, the accommodation for 11 to 14 year-olds is unsatisfactory; it is poor for those in the sixth form. Bisected by a very busy major road it has all the inconveniences of a split site umbilically attached by a shabby, unwelcoming, often very crowded underpass. Lateness to lessons is inevitable on occasion and extra costs are involved in, for example, running two dining facilities. Both buildings are showing signs of over-usage and long-term maintenance neglect. Weaknesses in provision of ramps for including the disabled are compounded by poor unwholesome toilet provision for

all. Specialist accommodation for design and technology and indoor physical education is inadequate. A new science block, about to be extended, contrasts very favourably with this and improved provision is contributing in part to the rapid improvements in standards in this subject. Worst of all, however, is the impoverished accommodation for the sixth form that denies study or recreational facilities in a growing school.

82. The school's finances are well managed. Extensive consultation ensures that developments are appropriately identified and prioritised. The budget is derived directly from the school's fully-costed development plan and so very good financial management contributes to raising standards. Financial planning covers both the forthcoming year and the longer term. The school gives high priority to exploring extra sources of income and recent, successful outcomes have included a new set of science laboratories and a soon to be opened ICT suite in which students may obtain an internationally recognised technical qualification. The school's overall use of ICT is, however, unsatisfactory, considering under-provision and the absence until very recently of a suitable ICT department, which meant that the school's ability to give the students their National Curriculum entitlement was jeopardised. The grants for students with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language are effectively used to provide support teachers and necessary resources. Although learning support assistants' contributions are very good, their number is insufficient for need.

83. Control of income and expenditure is good. The school has introduced strong systems: budgets are monitored monthly and reports submitted to governors as well as budget-holders. Any variance from planned expenditure is thoroughly investigated. A good feature is the monthly financial newsletter, sent to budget holders, informing them of new developments and raising any issues of general concern.

84. Governors play an appropriate role in financial matters, for example by receiving and critically examining financial reports. The school applies the principles of 'Best Value' to very good effect, consulting with stakeholders, for example seeking parental views before an increase in the standard number for admissions. A current substantial under-spend is earmarked carefully to complement about to be undertaken initiatives. The school provides good value for money because it achieves above average standards on average levels of funding. This, together with evaluation of expenditure and longer-term planning constitute good improvements over the position recorded at the previous inspection.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

85. A new head of sixth form with a new senior sixth form team has been in place for three weeks. This leadership is providing clear direction to the work of the sixth form. The headteacher and governors have identified sixth form standards, as an area for improvement. Results in recent years, although broadly in line with national figures, have been static. However, GCSE results have been rising and the school is keen to see this reflected in sixth form work. Improving accommodation for the sixth form is a priority, as is developing the tutorial system. A good start has been made and the priorities that have been identified are appropriate. These priorities are part of the whole school improvement plan, but a detailed plan for the sixth form has yet to be set out. To bring about this improvement the school has decided on a number of changes to the sixth form and a clear statement of aims has been published and shared with the students and parents.

86. The monitoring of teaching in subjects is part of the whole-school line management system that is also applied in the sixth form. The school knows the strengths and weaknesses in subjects through its good use of data and is using this to focus greater attention on sixth form teaching and particularly on student learning: hence the changes this year to monitoring sixth form personal study time. Inspection evidence supports the schools' view that greater attention needs to be given in some subjects to teaching that requires greater involvement of students in their own learning. These changes have not been comfortable for some students and have been made more difficult by the poor accommodation for the sixth form. The school is actively seeking to improve the situation. Monitoring by the school of students' personal study time shows during some lessons in the week the available accommodation is very limited. Students do have access at times to the excellent learning resource centre, but at others they must use dining rooms and spare classrooms. Unsatisfactory provision for students' use of ICT both in lessons and during personal study time should improve with the imminent opening of new facilities. Increasingly the school is using performance data as part of the regular review of departments. Value added data is available for individual students and subjects. This is also used as part of department discussions. There is no evidence that specific performance targets have been set for the sixth form.

### ***Resources***

87. Overall resources to support sixth form studies are satisfactory. The learning resources centre is excellent and has a wide range of modern texts and resources for all the subjects studied. This facility makes a significant contribution to students' learning. Some subjects such as design and technology are particularly good at encouraging students' use of this centre as a means of developing their skills of research and independent study. Unfortunately, there are occasions when sixth form students cannot gain access to the centre; it may be used for other groups or there are insufficient study places for the numbers requiring them. Resources are very good in geography and the department offers a small study base for sixth form geography students to offset the lack of study facilities for the sixth form generally. Teachers of government and politics provide a wide range of up-to-date materials to support and encourage wider reading around the subject and this shows in the high quality and mature class discussions. The quality of resources is variable in practical areas. It is very good in art and design, but students of graphics lack access to good quality drawing materials. Resources for biology are good, but the shortfall of resources in chemistry affects standards.

88. The sixth form is cost effective and is not subsidised from the main school. Staff are well qualified for the wide range of subjects on offer. The curriculum meets the needs of students. The school is flexible when it arranges the choices of courses for students and tries to meet individual need. This happens in most cases, but the numbers on courses vary from year to year and the school tries to manage this in the most cost-effective way. There are some courses with very small numbers, for example modern foreign languages, but numbers are increasing and the school has decided to continue them so as to offer a full range of options for students. Other courses have large numbers for example A/S performing arts and A/S mathematics. These groups are too large for teachers to give sufficient individual attention. Some students decide to take vocational courses at local colleges so vocational courses taught in the school also vary from year to year. Overall, the school carefully applies the principles of best value to the sixth form, particularly through the curriculum on offer.

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

89. The following areas of concern should form the basis of the governors' post-inspection action plan for further improvement.

- (1) Raise further standards in science by continuing to improve the management of the subject and monitoring very closely students' scientific learning and the progress they make.  
(See paragraphs: 2, 6, 8, 31, 76, 118, 121, 123 and 218)
- (2) Expand rapidly the contribution ICT makes to students' learning in all subjects so that it meets National Curriculum requirements, especially for 11 to 14 year-olds. Do this by completing the programme of teacher training, making the use of ICT a high priority in the school programme of evaluation of teaching and learning and improving access to it for each department.  
(See paragraphs: 4, 21, 35, 40, 42, 43, 62, 72, 76, 78, 79, 82, 86, 97, 116, 123, 126, 132, 140, 146, 147, 154, 158, 161-3, 175, 188, 201, 215, 222, 252 and 255)
- (3) Meet more uniformly the national requirement for improved provision for the gifted and talented by identifying such students and devising suitable provision for them, for instance modelled on the way Spanish is now run.  
(See paragraphs: 6, 45, 167 and 176)
- (4) Meet National Curriculum requirements for the provision of physical activities for Years 7 to 9, and provide a daily act of collective worship.  
(See section 2 above and paragraphs 43, 51, 74 and 82)
- (5) Improve the ways tutor time adds to the students' education.  
(See paragraphs 31, 51, 63, 66 and 77)

In addition to the above key issues, the governors should in their action planning consider how they might provide more up-to-date job descriptions for the staff, as a basis of even clearer professional review and the setting up a policy for numeracy.

## Sixth form

- (1) As a means of raising standards in the sixth form, improve the opportunities students have both for individual and group study and for developing their social skills. This will entail greater and better access to learning resources for independent study and more suitable accommodation arrangements.  
(See paragraphs: 23, 27, 38, 81, 86, 140, 246, and 248)
- (2) Monitor more closely the value added to students' education in all subjects between the start and end of the sixth form and act upon reasons for the failures to improve at similar rates to those students registered when they were in Years 7 to 11.  
(See paragraphs 17, 75, 218 and 223)
- (3) Raise standards in mathematics and science by:
  - making sure group sizes allow enough flexibility in learning and that teachers are able to offer more individual attention and high quality assessment and marking;
  - having teachers balance the work better, getting the students to play more active parts, for example in debate, in lessons and spending less time giving out information;
  - improving the part ICT plays in students' learning;
  - making sure that in Years 7 to 11 the students learn more thoroughly the wider applications of both mathematics and science to everyday life so that they improve their appreciation of the subjects.  
(See mathematics and science sections)
- (4) Improve the use of tutor time so that the students' work and progress are monitored more closely.  
(See paragraph references in 5 above)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	144
	Sixth form	74
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		146

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	4	35	60	46	1	0	0
Percentage	2.7	24	41	31.5	0.7	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	22	29	19	2	0	0
Percentage	2.7	29.7	39.1	25.7	2.7	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 here as each lesson represents more than one percentage point*

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1187	239
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	76	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	29	2
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	230	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	204

<b>Student mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	129	109	238

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	80	96	84
	Girls	83	80	68
	Total	163	176	152
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (73)	74 (76)	64 (68)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (31)	54 (54)	27 (31)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	102	102
	Girls	92	86	87
	Total	183	188	189
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (81)	79 (73)	79 (59)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (42)	51 (48)	33 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	128	100	228

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	62	121	127
	Girls	54	93	98
	Total	116	214	225
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	51 (50)	94 (96)	99 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	40
	National	38.4

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	44	57	101

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	13.7	17.1	15.7	2.4	1.8	2.1
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7



### ***Ethnic background of students***

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	27
Black – African heritage	14
Black – other	0
Indian	46
Pakistani	96
Bangladeshi	10
Chinese	10
White	1193
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	5	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	19	1
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	80	2
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	83.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.6

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	154

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.73
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	22.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4 002 535
Total expenditure	3 948 117
Expenditure per student	2 812
Balance brought forward from previous year	164 297
Balance carried forward to next year	218 715

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	35.25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	38.50
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1395
Number of questionnaires returned	264

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	55	7	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	7	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	59	14	2	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	58	21	3	2
The teaching is good.	22	64	7	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	46	20	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	42	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	45	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	55	17	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	27	53	9	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	56	7	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	48	15	2	9

### Other issues raised by parents

Extra comments included a number of parents' appreciation of the good all round education the school provided; the good communications between school and home, including the informative reports; the quality of provision in English; the good quality of pastoral care through the house structure and the leadership of the new headteacher.

Negative comments referred to misbehaviour on buses; poor science provision; disruption in some classes; inconsistency in the setting of homework; teacher turnover and the re-arranged day.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

#### **Strengths:**

- Standards are high because excellent leadership gives the subject a clear sense of educational direction and produces a good quality of teaching.
- Monitoring of the performance of teachers is very good: this makes sure the teaching team's very good subject knowledge produces the demanding learning activities that lead to the high standards.
- The good curriculum provides students of all ages with stimulating experiences, including a very good range of out-of-school activities.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Improve the way classes are arranged in Year 9, so that greater demands may be made on the highest attainers, making sure they have a clearer picture of how well they are doing.
- Some classes are too big for the teacher to be able to work closely enough with each student.
- Improve the use of ICT in lessons.

90. Standards of work seen in English are good overall and very good in the sixth form. These standards are achieved because the good quality of teaching promotes similar learning.

91. Standards on entry to Year 7 have improved slightly and are now broadly in line with national levels. Attainment at the end of Year 9 fluctuated and declined between 1996 and 2000 when the percentage achieving Level 5 or better in National Curriculum tests was close to the national average, but well below the level of similar schools. Standards rose substantially in 2001. At age 14, girls achieve better than do boys, but boys are attaining higher standards than are boys nationally.

92. Students with special educational needs make good progress at all ages, as do students with English as an additional language. Boys of Asian descent make faster progress than do other boys. Students' progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11 and attainment at GCSE is above the national average in both English Language and English Literature by about half a grade. In 2000, more than four-fifths of students obtained higher GCSE grades, A\*-C, in English and three-quarters of all students achieved those grades in English Literature. Results in 2001 remained similar, with almost three-quarters of students achieving higher, A\*-C, grades in English and nearly nine-tenths reaching those grades in English Literature. At this age girls continue to attain better than do boys.

93. In the sixth form students achieve very good standards. In 2000, the A-Level results of the 56 candidates were very good, with over half gaining the highest grades, A or B, and no failures. The number entered in 2001 was smaller, but with a similar pattern of no failures and about half attaining the highest grades.

94. Overall, the work of the English department is very successful in promoting high standards and raising the standards of about or below average students to levels above national averages, adding considerable value to their education.

95. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 9 the teaching was good or better in four-fifths of the lessons. Teaching for Years 10 and 11 was good or better in seven-eighths of lessons, being very good in nearly half. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching that was at least very good in two-thirds of the sixth form lessons and some excellent teaching produced excellent learning.

96. Almost all lessons contain a good mixture of activities, on language and on literature, with group and individual tasks, some oral and some written work. Expectations are high and lessons are brisk and purposeful. Excellent management of students and very positive relationships mean that there is little disruptive behaviour and no time lost. Short exercises from the National Literacy Strategy are well taught as part of most lessons in Years 7 to 9. In some mixed-attainment Year 9 classes, higher-attaining students are not challenged sufficiently. Students of low attainment make good progress in very effective "skills" lessons. In Years 10 and 11, small groups of low attainers make good progress in language and literature because they are taught well. The highest attainers are also taught well, both at this age and in the sixth form. However, classes of high attainers are often too large for the teacher to be able to give individuals all the attention their work deserves. Nonetheless, marking and assessment are thorough. Students receive precise guidance about personal targets and many benefit from extra lessons organised outside school hours. Homework is generally satisfactory and often good, consolidating and developing work done in lessons.

97. Students make good progress in speaking and listening. They respond readily and enthusiastically to questions with answers that indicate that they have been listening carefully. When required, they can develop their original answer with more detail or better expression. They work well together and can build upon one another's answers. Reading skills develop well. The learning resource centre is well used and class teachers receive very detailed information about each student's reading history. Teachers read very well, providing excellent examples for students who, themselves, also read well aloud. They read a wide range of materials, from fiction to media studies, from printed text and from electronic sources. They learn to evaluate the quality of what they read and to keep a reading diary. Writing skills are well taught and develop well at all ages. Teachers emphasise the importance of understanding the aims, audience and style of any writing and the criteria by which it will be marked. Students are well instructed in planning skills and are helped with redrafting and correcting at appropriate stages in the writing. Students of all ages write fluently and expressively. There is high quality creative writing at all ages, from a fairy story in Year 7 to a fantasy of a life lived backwards in Year 13. Many students use word processing skills in the organisation and presentation of attractive written work. ICT is not, however, used sufficiently to develop writing skills and research skills. Written work is marked thoroughly with well-focused comment, praising individual achievement and noting aspects for improvement. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are noted, but corrections are not always evident. GCSE and sixth form marking includes a helpful grade related to examination criteria. Marking in Year 9 does not always include reference to National Curriculum levels to help students understand their own achievement in relation to national standards for their age.

98. The academic leadership of the subject is excellent. A strong, shared educational direction, enthusiasm and commitment are communicated well to students. Aims and procedures in line with school policies are clearly set out and enacted across the department. Day-to-day management is good, supported by good co-operation and effective delegation of responsibilities. Resources are good, well managed and increasing in a

systematic purchasing programme. Like other subjects, English extends its resources by making good use of the excellent learning resource centre. The curriculum is good and is extended by, for example, book evenings, debates and an extensive programme of theatre visits.

99. The subject has continued to make good progress since the previous inspection and its current strengths indicate that the capacity for future improvement is very good.

### **Drama**

Overall the quality of the provision in drama is good.

#### Strengths

- Good quality teaching raises standards and leads to the well above average pass rates at GCSE and at A-level.
- The subject has an increasing popularity as a choice at GCSE.
- The quality and popularity of school productions offer valuable educational experiences to large numbers of students of all ages and levels of attainment working together.

#### Areas for improvement

- Learning in Years 7 to 9 is too fragmented and behaviour and attainment suffer as a result.
- Accommodation for drama is inadequate.

100. Standards in drama are good overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but a lack of continuity in the curriculum arrangements limits standards and behaviour also suffers. Many Year 9 students experienced no drama in Year 8 and at the time of the inspection were being reintroduced to the high standards expected of them. The establishing of good standards in Years 7 to 9 and the high attainment in subsequent years are achieved because good teaching develops students' interest and adds to their skills.

101. Students in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress and reach well above average standards at GCSE, with nine-tenths achieving the higher, A\*-C, grades in 2000. This level of attainment is well above the national average. In the sixth form, A-Level students on the performance studies course achieve well, with all candidates passing and one-fifth of them achieving one of the highest, A or B, grades.

102. Overall the standard of teaching is good. None was unsatisfactory and more than half was at least very good. Some excellent teaching promoted the highest levels and quality of learning.

103. Drama makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. The work includes a good variety of educational challenges involving, for example, sound effects techniques and skills. There is work on a text or theme such as bullying and also opportunity for an individual to explore personal feelings. Working in groups and evaluating their own and others' contributions develops mature social skills. The popular and successful GCSE course is appropriate for the students. The new specification at A-Level contains a community performance element that broadens the curriculum well for that age group.

104. Procedures and systems are consistent and clear and the day-to-day management of the department is good. Effective staff monitoring is in place. Assessment of students is accurate and well used. The excellent leadership of the subject is a strength and the head of department has led an impressive growth and development in drama since her appointment.

Drama has made very good progress since the previous inspection and the quality of the leadership and the teaching indicate that the capacity for further improvement is substantial.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### **Strengths**

- Students reach above average standards.
- Students display good attitudes towards the subject and have good relationships with their teachers.
- There is a very good programme of preparation for public examinations.
- Good use is made of homework to develop skills learnt in class.
- Students have good arithmetical skills.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The students' mathematical experiences are unsatisfactory; they are not given a broad enough appreciation of the application of the subject to everyday life.
- Teachers need to take more carefully into consideration the work that has been covered in primary schools.

105. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average. Students' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are good. Students' good attitudes help the quality of their learning in mathematics to be good. Teaching is satisfactory.

106. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment, although there are very few at the highest levels expected at the age of 11 and few at the lowest levels. However, a small proportion of students still has difficulties with basic arithmetic. Students demonstrate good attitudes to mathematics at all ages and this is clearly manifested in Year 7 where students show enthusiasm, particularly for practical tasks such as investigating symmetry. However, not all teachers of Year 7 students have full information about the work already covered in primary schools, so students sometimes repeat work unnecessarily.

107. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, students reach standards that are above the national average and so have made good progress during their first three years in the school. In recent years, these standards have risen at a faster rate than has occurred nationally. Standards are now average compared with similar schools. There is no significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

108. GCSE results in 2000 were above the national average both for the percentage of students passing the subject and for the proportion gaining higher grades, A\*-C. These results are higher than at the time of the previous inspection – a good improvement. Results would be higher still if the students had greater opportunity to apply their mathematical skills more widely. As at age 14, there is no significant difference between the results for boys and those for girls and students with English as an additional language make progress at least as good as other students.

109. Students with special educational needs make good progress. This is because high quality individual education plans, drawn up by specialist teachers, provide teachers of mathematics with detailed and useful information. Additionally, such students are taught in groups that are smaller in size than others, so that they receive more individual attention and the work is appropriately tailored to their needs. The grouping system ensures that the needs

of all students can be met. The report of the previous inspection identified inconsistencies in this area, which are now no longer present.

110. Standards are above average at ages 14 and 16 because of a very thorough programme of preparation of students for the examinations. At all ages, teachers regularly draw the attention of students to the content of examinations. A good example occurred in a Year 10 class just starting to factorise equations. The teacher showed them the type of questions that could be expected in the final examination. This feature, pronounced at all ages, makes a considerable contribution to sustaining students' motivation.

111. Whilst students make good progress in number, algebra, shape spacing, measurements and data handling, their skills in using and applying mathematics are weaker: they are not always able to transfer their numeracy skills outside mathematics lessons. This has an immediate detrimental effect on the use of number in other subjects. For example, in design and technology, students had difficulties in sub-dividing units of measurement. In the longer-term, those choosing to pursue mathematics in the sixth form are also penalised. Students have a good understanding of when to use, and when not to use calculators. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.

112. Teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and it was good in just over a quarter of the lessons, an improvement on the previous inspection. Good teaching features a well-chosen variety of tasks. In a Year 7 lesson on symmetry, for example, students produced complex symmetrical shapes by cutting, they investigated symmetry in three dimensions with the use of a mirror, undertook an exercise in identifying lines of symmetry and sought patterns in a small investigation. The best lessons also include skilfully selected questions, good use of analogy and introducing students to devices to aid memory. A good example of these was seen when a 'smiley face' diagram was used to help students learn how to multiply algebraic terms; good relations and good humour led to good quality learning.

113. The recently introduced 'Playing for Success' project is beginning to promote activities of greater variety for some. However, many lessons have a focus that is too restricted. For example, students in some lessons undertake excessive mechanical practice, so they do not become aware of any practical applications of the topic and fail to understand the purpose behind it. The result is that they do not develop their mathematical abilities to the full. Hence, whilst students are adept at examination questions, their ability to apply their learning more widely is under-developed. Greater use of practical examples would add to students' understanding of mathematics. Further, when mathematics is learnt as a mechanical process, it does not make a satisfactory contribution to the students' general personal development.

114. The use made of homework is good and instances of non-completion are rare. It links well with class work and helps students to work with greater independence and to consolidate learning in preparation for the next steps. Students' work is marked regularly, although comment is not uniformly informative. The best level of comment informs students of what they can do and the next stages for development. Other comments just remark upon the effort a student has made without indicating the level of achievement. However, regular testing provides teachers and students with high quality information on progress. The head of the department also uses this data to monitor the work of teachers.

115. Students enjoy good relations with their teachers and, unlike in the previous inspection, no instance of unpleasant relations was observed. Similarly, on the infrequent occasion on which less-than-satisfactory behaviour occurred, the teacher always intervened effectively. The rare instances of unsatisfactory behaviour did not affect the learning of



others. Lack of application occurred when tasks were mis-matched to the needs of the students.

116. The department is well managed by a head of department who has established appropriate priorities for the development of the subject. He has a good knowledge of national and local initiatives. The programme of study meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the use of ICT and it is not used enough to help raise standards.

117. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and standards have risen.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is unsatisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- Students enjoy science.
- Assessment generally is well established and of good quality.
- The planning of lessons is good.
- Students take a pride in their books that are now marked more frequently.
- Technician support is well organised.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is below the national and well below the school average. This is a major weakness in the school.
- The management structure is weak and coherence is poor.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lacks enough rigour.
- The contribution of ICT to the students' learning is unsatisfactory.

118. Overall standards in science have been too low since the previous inspection. This unsatisfactory situation is the result of a period, now partially resolved, poor leadership and management in the subject. Improvements of late in teaching and in the management of the department have not yet percolated into acceptable GCSE examination results. There is still too great a variation between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 and between often-successful learning in the classroom and the results of examinations. Standards in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 have been consistently above the national average, yet the GCSE results were well below the national average in 2000 and, despite a substantial rise, still too low compared with the students' performances in other subjects in 2001.

119. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average and occasionally above average. In lessons generally, most students are achieving well. For example, students in Year 7 are able to plan an investigation about the effect of size and colour on gaining heat; they anticipate and predict a range of possible outcomes and recognise the importance of a fair test. Lower attainers in Year 9 are confident in their learning about the place of metals in the periodic table and of their reactions with water. Students with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and also make satisfactory progress.

120. The proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above was above the national average in 2000. At Level 6 and above, it was below it and below the average for similar schools. However, in 2001, national test results improved substantially, but no national comparisons are available. Generally, girls do slightly better than boys at both levels but the difference is no more than found nationally.

121. Attainment among 14 to 16 year-olds is below average and is unsatisfactory. Standards in science go against the general trend of improvement in the school as a whole during these years. At the end of Year 11, most students study for the GCSE double-science award, but a few, not necessarily the highest attainers, study separate sciences, although this pattern ends with the present year. In comparison with English and mathematics, attainment in science is poor. In 2000, the proportion of students obtaining higher grades, A\*-C, (27 per cent), was well below the national average. Here, girls did slightly better than boys and the difference was greater than that found nationally. There was a substantial, 16 per cent improvement in higher grade passes, A\*-C, in the latest, unconfirmed, results for 2001: The proportion attaining A\*-G also increased. Indeed, improvements in science were the principal reason for the school's substantial rise in GCSE point scores in 2001. At 43 per cent, the proportion obtaining a higher grade, A\*-C, was still way below what could reasonably be expected.

122. In the sixth form the department also offers physics, chemistry and biology at A/S and A-level, with varying success. These are reported separately.

123. Following the period of uncertainty, the department has reverted to subject-based responsibilities with a common line-manager from the senior leadership team. This temporary arrangement is an improvement on the former situation. Most significant is the general improvement in standards over the past year at both key stages. There is, however, no overall head of science and, although subjects are very well supported, there are unresolved management issues and decisions to be made; for example about the rigour of the evaluation of teaching, job descriptions and clarity of responsibilities. A significant turnover in staffing and a shortage of laboratory technicians compound management problems. Recently, a number of changes have taken place that affect students' learning positively. Documentation has improved in part and schemes of work have been revised and are supported by new text material. Records of students' success are now securely in place and, in addition to prior attainment, the results of practical assessments, end of module tests and yearly examinations are successfully used to improve the next stage of learning. This is a step forward, but it does not yet generate individual targets, track students' progress or relate directly to National Curriculum levels. Four new laboratories and associated preparation and storage rooms of excellent quality are now open, contrasting with the remaining accommodation, apparatus and equipment that are of poor quality, old and worn out and generally unsatisfactory. Teachers and technicians are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this. There is a serious shortfall of ICT in students' experience and, on a daily basis, there is also a shortage in the routine engagement of young students in relevant investigative, problem-solving activity and modes of inquiry.

124. The quality of teaching is now satisfactory. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well with students. Teachers organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in lessons on heating substances in Year 8, and on looking at how changing the temperature might change the rate of rate of enzyme activity with students in Year 11. In nearly all lessons, aims and intended outcomes were displayed and known by the students. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. A range of teaching and learning strategies is used and relevant homework is largely well thought out and clearly extends the learning. Whole-class questioning is often used effectively and the pace of lessons is generally good. In good and very good lessons, most students are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This was demonstrated well with lower-attaining students working with electrical circuits in Year 10. Assessment is properly organised and effective and there are regular assessments through end of unit tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Students' books and other work are marked regularly, sometimes with praise, supportive and informative

comment. There are relevant out-of-school activities such as the WISE (women in science education) bus, an annual biology field trip and numerous visits to places and activities that are related to science education. The quality of students' work on display is good and some is excellent.

125. Behaviour is satisfactory, but it varies, and to a large extent depends on the ability and experience of the teacher in organising and controlling the class. Expectations on the part of most teachers are high and relationships are generally good. Most students take great pride in their work and books are well looked after. These students are keen, willing and attentive and approach work enthusiastically. Some get a real sense of enjoyment in acquiring new knowledge and skills, for example, where Year 11 students were engaged with the practical aspects of testing urine for sugar, and relating the outcomes to their understanding of how insulin and glucagon control blood sugar levels. Students enjoy practical work in science; they concentrate satisfactorily and work well collaboratively.

126. The three heads of subject work well together and effectively support both new and experienced teachers, and the department is meeting the requirements in science of the National Curriculum. Many teachers have not yet developed the skills of using computers effectively. There remains a serious shortfall of ICT in students' day-to-day experience, indicated by lack of evidence in lessons and students' books. Written work by students is often quite formal, although there are some examples of creative and imaginative writing and recording.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is well planned, with a good balance of theory and practical work.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There is a need to develop three-dimensional skills further.
- The lack of use of ICT throughout the department is a weakness.

127. Teacher assessment shows that attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the national average. The proportion of students at the age of 16 gaining higher grades, A\*-C, in GCSE examinations in 2000 reached the national average. Over the past year the trend in results has been upwards.

128. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards of 14 year-olds are in line with national expectations. Year 9 students are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They observe well from direct observation and understand three-dimensional concepts. They are able to explore ideas and assess visual information, including images and artefacts from different historical and cultural contexts.

129. In a Year 9 lesson using natural forms for direct observation, the students were able to arrange shapes well for composition and had a good understanding of spatial layout. They experimented with colour mixing and could simplify images and consider textural surfaces. Work shows greater perceptual depth when students use first hand observation as a basis for their work. Students with special educational needs achieve well, reaching good attainment levels, benefiting from individual attention. By the time students are 16, much of the work is above the standard expected: students can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. They demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and

other cultures through the work they produce. Students often show the influence of important movements in art and design, or particular artists. They use sketchbooks effectively. Technical language develops well; Year 10 students speak confidently about their work, with good knowledge and understanding. Work from architectural research develops well through colour experimentations.

130. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good throughout. This is a direct result of the high expectations and enthusiasm that the teachers bring to their work and the high standards they set. Students enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves purposefully. There is an effective working ethos and students behave and do their best. They want to improve and do well and are eager to explain their work to classmates and visitors alike.

131. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers know students well and plan their lessons to meet individual requirements. They use their knowledge and expertise to good effect within the classroom and lesson preparation is very good at all stages. The preparation and implementation of individual education plans for students with special educational needs is most effective. Lessons start with the teacher identifying what the class will learn and with revision of previous learning. Careful, clear explanations and good intervention at key points enable good progress to be made. There is emphasis on procedure, methods and care of equipment. In a Year 8 lesson on composition, the teacher showed the class a good example of space filling and layout. As a result of using good resources to illustrate ideas of proportion and scale, the students understood the ideas and, at the same time, good teaching brought in direct connections with Art Nouveau. In a Year 11 lesson on coursework for the GCSE examination, students developed ideas from various resources and made personal choices. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the connection made with artists that had influenced their work. Teachers' time management is very good, students are kept hard at it; there is good use of questioning that develops positive thinking skills. They have good presentation skills and vary their strategies to meet learning requirements. A more structured pattern of homework is now in place in Years 7 to 9, but students need to be more aware of their levels of work. Homework is good and appropriate in subject matter, being used to support project work for 14 to 16 year-olds. Well-constructed assessments make a significant contribution to the development and progress of students' work.

132. The subject is well led by a newly appointed head of department. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear and provide good guidance for staff. The head of department monitors effectively the work of the department through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment is effective and informs curriculum planning adequately. There is very limited access to computers within the department; further accommodation has to be booked. ICT has not yet been developed sufficiently. Further in-service training is needed.

133. The teaching of claywork would benefit the department's approach to three-dimensional study. Technical help, storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. The library provision for good quality reference books is excellent and meets fully the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base.

134. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good. Assessment procedures have been refined in order to ensure students have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievement and to set targets for future development more effectively. Art

history connections and research have moved forward. Written aims and objectives, which link programmes of study and teaching approaches, are now established.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching ensures good learning by all students.
- Attainment is consistently high in textiles.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory.
- Long-term departmental planning does not cover replacement of equipment.
- The lesson time allocated to food technology does not allow skills and plans to be fully developed.

135. The provision in design and technology caters for all students in Years 7 to 9 and Year 11, also for 118 students in Year 10. Students are entered for GCSE in electronics, food technology, graphics, resistant materials and textiles.

136. Overall in 2000, the GCSE results were close to the national average, with textiles and graphics achieving well above average, while electronics was well below average. In the most recent 2001 GCSE examination, textiles continued to have high results. Food technology results had improved significantly in the higher, A\*-C, grades, while the numbers achieving the higher grades in graphics had declined, and electronics results continued to be low. Results in resistant materials and graphics were adversely affected by staffing problems.

137. Lesson observation and an analysis of samples of work confirm that overall achievement at the end of Year 11 matches the national expectations. When students enter the school, attainment in design and technology is below average. This is because very few students have experienced the full design, making and evaluation process. Also, not all have handled wood and not all have used textiles or food. Therefore all students, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress to reach standards that are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9. They have a clear understanding of the design, making and evaluating process, and use research effectively, for example to explore the properties of fibres. Practical research brings the subject alive to students. This occurred when they tasted yoghurt, cheese and milk to see if taste was altered due to different fat contents. They were surprised that taste differed so little between the high and low fat products. Careful planning ensures that each step is completed, and students are encouraged to be honest in their evaluations. For example, a student added that 'my measuring was rubbish'. The quality of the presentation of their work improves over the three years. The teaching of graphical skills enhances this. This was seen when students were taught the need for careful measuring when learning isometric drawings. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. By the end of Year 11, the quality of design and making improves appropriately. Standards seen reflect the latest examination results, with high attainment in textiles, well above average achievement in graphics and food, and well below average standards in electronics. For example, the presentation of research into children's stories was excellent, with a subtle use of colour appropriate to the theme of fairytales meeting well the criterion of designing for purpose. A comprehensive project on blister packaging showed good individual research. Students know the characteristics of a range of equipment, exemplified when coleslaw was made using different knives, hand and machine graters. They evaluated each sensibly, by looking at the finished product, the ease of use and

time taken. Students also use computer-aided machines effectively, for example to produce logos on garments. Some students are, however, less motivated: their work lacks the required detail so their achievement is unsatisfactory.

138. Teaching overall is good. Lessons are never less than satisfactory, with three out of seven good and two very good in Years 7 to 9, and two out of seven lessons good in Years 10 and 11, with two very good. No time is wasted in the good and better lessons, so that much is covered and students learn a great deal. For example, in a food lesson, students learnt oven management, the use of a potato peeler and the skill of rubbing in, which is a tremendous amount to cover in a very short time. Rapid questioning at the end showed this had been learnt, and lesson-end resumes were common features of the good teaching. Assessment is built well into all teaching and students know their targets. Questioning is very good: probing questions make students think and arrive at the correct conclusion. When a model of part of a space ship would not fit together, the teacher got the student to think of the possible reasons until he arrived at the correct explanation. Challenging tasks also improve the students' learning. For example, a Year 8 class completed as homework an isometric drawing, which included detail on the item chosen. This was following their first lesson on this area of graphics, and to add detail is a demanding task which involves independent learning. Relationships are very good, which motivates students to learn and to succeed. For example, students are very ready to say what they do not understand or cannot do, which helps their learning. This was seen when a Year 11 student stayed on to ask again and again about the work, because he did not initially understand the task. Some satisfactorily taught lessons lacked some pace and sense of urgency, as the students were not all motivated. Also students were told what they should know, which gave no indication of what had been learnt. In an electronics lesson, extension work was not prepared, which wasted time for a few students, progress was not checked, with the result that some were unable to work hard enough to extend their learning.

139. Students enjoy design and technology, and this was seen in their curiosity about the subject. For example, a student asked if Tofu could be used as a filling, and through this its properties were explored. Their interest extends into good research. For example, a student visited Carnaby Street and the Victoria and Albert Museum to further her research into fashion styles, and she shared her photographs with others. She was one of several students with special educational needs whose application, interest and motivation has led to a prediction of at least a C grade at GCSE, which is very good achievement. Students work so well together that, for example, in a Year 7 class on linkages, the teacher altered the next task to a more exciting one portraying practical applications.

140. Leadership and management are good and the teachers and valued technicians work well as a team. There has been a satisfactory improvement in standards and teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers give freely of their time to students, which extends learning. The quality of teaching and standards achieved result from the dedication of the teachers, who work under difficulties. An absence of textbooks for Years 7 to 9 and unhygienic surfaces in food technology compound deficiencies in the accommodation for graphics and resistant materials. ICT facilities and cold food storage space are also insufficient. Equipment is still worn and the timetable arrangements mean that there is insufficient time to complete tasks in lessons.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

Strengths.

- Standards, particularly in recent GCSE examinations, are well above average.

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students' very good attitudes and behaviour lead to good learning.
- The subject is very well led.
- Resources for teaching the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Teaching needs to use local maps and other local examples more often, so that learning relates more closely to the students' experience.
- Students need more opportunities to conduct enquiries in groups, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- ICT is underused in Years 7 to 11 and there is not enough fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.
- Students are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve.

141. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Years 7 to 9. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good and students' attitudes to learning are very positive. Students' achievements in relation to standards at the start of Year 7 are good by the end of Year 9. By this time, students have a very good grounding in geographical skills. Most, except for a few low attainers, are able to use and interpret Ordnance survey maps well. Graphical analyses of statistical data are good. Higher and average attainers' knowledge of location is very good, but all students' understanding of spatial patterns is weak. In Years 7 to 9, progress is good for students of all attainment levels. Students with special educational needs, when provided with specialist support, make good progress but at other times it varies, as in some classes tasks are not adequately simplified to meet students' needs.

142. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 10 and 11. Some is well above. Students' achievements at the end of Year 11 are high against the national average for both boys and girls. This indicates good achievement by most students since entering Year 10 and, for a few, very good progress. High-attaining students can explain a range of physical and human processes very well. Average-attaining students are able to describe these processes and have an understanding of their geographical significance. Low-attainers are able to identify some processes, but are less clear of their geographical significance. The best independent study projects for GCSE are of very high quality, but some students are underachieving in this aspect of the course, owing to negative attitudes. The good progress in Years 10 and 11 is because of positive measures taken to improve achievement, including good revision and examination materials and regular testing of students' understanding of what they have been taught.

143. Recent GCSE higher, A\*-C, grade results are above or well above the national average for maintained secondary schools. The trend of improvement is much greater than the national trend. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades is above the position nationally most years. Boys usually perform better than girls' do but this is not always the case, as in 2001, when boys and girls performed equally well. Boys' performance is very high as against the national position. When compared with other GCSE subjects, geography results are above or well above the average for both girls and boys. Recent GCSE A\*-G results have been above the national average. The subject has been a popular option at GCSE, although numbers dropped in the 2001 intake.

144. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and most display a real interest and often enjoyment in their work. Students work well, are attentive and work at good pace. Many display a real pride in their work that is well presented. Behaviour is usually very good but, without strong management and control, could be challenging. Relationships with teachers are constructive and frequently a real rapport is evident that contributes significantly to

students' progress. Students' individual responses to questions are often good, but oral skills are not sufficiently well developed in some classes.

145. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching and learning are generally good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11, where students are more mature and beginning to understand concepts better. Boys and girls apply themselves well to their learning, have appropriately high aspirations and most want to do well. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. Classroom management and control, built on a foundation of good relationships, are of a high standard. Teachers generally have a very good knowledge of topics taught, set an effective pace and have high expectations. Very frequently, the most effective lessons had clear and manageable aims that were shared with students at the start and were tested at the end to ensure that they had been met. On occasions, the latter was rushed and detracted from the necessary consolidation of learning. The best lessons were imaginatively and thoroughly planned, offering a variety of suitable practical activities for students to involve themselves in the learning. When visual aids such as video extracts, maps and graphs were used, learning was noticeably better. High quality learning took place in a Year 11 lesson on the landform characteristics of the upper reaches of a river valley. Students were highly motivated by lively, imaginative and stimulating focused teaching. A very good range of visual materials, including photographs and film, was particularly effective in ensuring that they understood what processes contributed to the development of landforms. Learning would be further improved if there were sometimes greater consolidation and reinforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board or overhead projector.

146. Local Ordnance Survey maps, local examples, student-based enquiry tasks and group work need to be used more in teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The use of a large standing world map in each specialist classroom would provide a greater understanding of patterns and places. The selection of appropriate materials for low attainment in sets in Years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory. Although no policy exists for literacy or numeracy, the teaching of these basic skills is satisfactory in practice. ICT has seen little development since the previous inspection. The department needs now to establish a coherent and workable programme of ICT skills to ensure that requirements over Years 7 to 11 are met. Fieldwork enriches older students' studies. However, it is inadequate in Years 7 to 9, as it does not meet the requirement to study physical features or a geographical area outside the local area.

147. The new head of department has already shown very good leadership qualities with sensitive modifications of department policy with the support of established staff. Competent specialists, who work extremely well as a team, teach the subject. The succinct, revised departmental handbook has a sharp focus on sustaining high standards of practice and development. The work of the department is carefully monitored through regular classroom observation and detailed scrutiny of students' work. However, there is now need to monitor the impact of teaching and training on the quality of learning. Marking is accurate, but not all students are aware of the attainment grade for work submitted and while some teachers ensure that students are clear how they can further improve their work, this is not always so. Wall displays provide a stimulating learning environment. Resources overall are very good, but there are too few videos and computers for teaching ICT to help improve learning.

148. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. However, some matters raised such as the need to improve differentiation in teaching and learning materials and identifying targets for learning have not been rectified completely. ICT is still underdeveloped. There is excellent capacity to develop further to meet the points identified in this report.



## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- The knowledge and expertise of the teachers is very good.
- Good relationships between teachers and their students raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' work in Years 7 to 9 does not enable teachers to monitor their progress or students to judge their progress in the key elements of history.
- Management provides no information base to guide teachers' planning or to show how history contributes to cross-curricular themes.

149. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 are not available. Assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that the proportion of students achieving the higher levels, 6 or higher, is above the national average and work seen during the inspection supports this judgement. Girls are performing well above the national average, and significantly better than are the boys. There is insufficient information to identify any trends over time. Results in the GCSE history examination in 2000 were above average for the proportion of students achieving higher grades, A\*-C, and the full range, A\*-G. Results for 2001 indicate similar attainment. All students achieved at least a pass grade. Boys are performing well above the national average for boys, while girls are achieving average levels of attainment for girls. Boys are performing relatively better at GCSE history than girls when compared with their other subjects.

150. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards, by the age of 14, are above average. No Year 9 lessons could be seen. By Year 9 students have a secure grasp of the periods studied. Research skills are good and students use source material with confidence to select and extract information, organising their findings logically and clearly into extended writing. Most students can identify multiple causes for events, for example the Industrial Revolution, and consider the effects of these causes on the different members of society. Most students recognise that history can be seen from differing viewpoints, a good example being their work on the effects of the enclosure of fields and common land. Higher attaining students are able to use graphs to make deductions concerning, for example, the period of migration from Europe to America; others require teacher guidance to do so. Without support, lower-attaining students' explanations of events are undeveloped, their analysis tends to be generalised, lacking detail. Extended projects demonstrate a high level of detail and research, in particular by higher-attaining students who develop their own opinions, supporting them with evidence, rather than merely collecting relevant information.

151. The standards, reached by students following the GCSE course, are above average. In extended writing, students display a good grasp of the variety of opinions regarding events they study. They can analyse information in order to understand the causes of events and make links between these and the effects. A good example is in their study of their work on the economic 'boom' period in America in the 1920s where students recognise that not all the population benefited from this prosperity. In their study of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, students display understanding of the different and changing views of people at the time, and are able to suggest problems that must be considered when handling source material. All students can identify propaganda, higher-attaining students readily identifying method and motive. Lower attaining students rely heavily upon their teachers and do not readily analyse information or consider the significance of material to an historian, taking it all at face value. When challenged, higher-attaining students respond well and are able to argue their opinion,

supporting their argument with reason and evidence. Students are able to use ICT as a research tool and to word-process some of their work.

152. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good. The motivation of students and the emphasis on acquisition of skills is enabling them to develop confidence in their use of source material and in information gathering. Opportunities for independent research are good and, in extended writing, they are showing increasing confidence in organisation. At times, however, too much guidance from teachers limits the growth of independence of higher-attaining students. However, the level of teacher support means that students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. The achievement of students following the GCSE course is good. Their extended writing indicates a growing ability to analyse information and to present their findings clearly. Higher attaining students develop a logical argument in their essays and a growing ability to present different points of view. The achievement of lower-attaining students is good, although there is a dependence upon the teacher for direction and analysis.

153. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to add colour and detail, and students clearly have confidence in them. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and involvement and, as a result, students enjoy a positive yet businesslike working environment. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and re-enforcing the work of the previous lesson enables students to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage the participation of all and good use of question and answer ensures that students are actively involved. Where teachers encourage students to develop and justify their responses, learning becomes detailed and thoughtful. Where the level of response accepted is too low and lessons become short question and answer sessions, understanding is more limited. ICT is used as a research tool and for word-processing; its full potential as a learning aid has not yet been developed. Day-to-day marking is regular and encouraging in the early years and the marking of essays in the GCSE course is good. Placing students in attainment groups from Year 8 enables teachers to use appropriate methods, and they meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Whole-class teaching limits the progress of higher-attaining students in Years 7 to 9 at times, and no use of work to challenge them further, was seen. The contribution of history teachers to the development of literacy is good. There is an emphasis upon specialist vocabulary and the good opportunities for students to develop their ideas in extended writing are supported by practice in essay planning.

154. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Assessment and planning are weak. There is no system in place to monitor the students' progress in history across the years, and they are not involved in their own assessment through an understanding of the requirements of the different levels of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work are in place for the early years only and there is no evidence of a clear department response to the need to provide whole school elements such as ICT. There is no body of information readily available for teachers that would support their planning and development. Teachers are, however, united in their concern for the development of their students, and the exchange of ideas is good. The department makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of the students, and the enthusiasm and concern shown by teachers is reflected by the confidence and respect demonstrated by students.

155. Management weaknesses apart, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Attainment has been raised and resources have been improved. The monitoring and development of teaching has begun and all lessons are now taught in attractive, well-resourced rooms.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is unsatisfactory.

### Strengths

- There is good teaching in ICT lessons.
- A good range of qualifications is available.
- Good use of ICT in the learning resource centre, the careers department, in English, business education and special educational needs improves the quality of learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Most subjects fail to teach required aspects of ICT.
- There is inconsistency of access to computers in Years 7 to 9 and the assessment of students' progress in ICT is weak.
- The school has too few computers.
- The duties of the head of department, the co-ordinator and technical support are not defined clearly enough.
- The staff-training programme in ICT is incomplete.

156. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average. In Years 10 and 11, standards remain below average, as the students do not make up the leeway caused by unsatisfactory provision up to the end of Year 9. Sixth formers attain average standards.

157. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have been adversely influenced, until very recently, by a lack of learning opportunities resulting from too few specialist teachers and computers.

158. Students' attainment when they start the school in Year 7 is below average. During Year 7, students have one lesson each week and achievement in relation to prior learning is satisfactory. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9 because of a lack of consistent practice: students have only one ICT lesson per week for one term. Poor time allocation and limited applications in other subjects reduce teaching and learning time to approximately one-quarter of what students have in most other schools.

159. Teacher assessments, showing standards above national expectations in 2000 and 2001, are insecure and are not substantiated by the work seen in files, computer work areas or through discussion with students.

160. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to what they have done beforehand, but standards are still below average. Achievement is better because of the improved timetable, better access to computers, clear short-term GNVQ targets and good teaching.

161. In the sixth form, students' attainment is average. They use their GNVQ experiences to support and consolidate their practice in key skills. Weaknesses show, however, because students have not had consistent teaching to improve their ICT as they moved through the school.

162. Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. For example, opportunities to research in the library and the careers area help their personal development and help the quality of learning in ICT to reach a satisfactory level.

163. Standards in lessons were below average in Years 7 to 9, mainly because, until just before the inspection, there was no specialist ICT department and because most subjects fail to meet the statutory requirements for ICT.

164. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students use the computer effectively to improve basic skills. They use the tool bar icons, such as spell check, when writing notes and reports and sum/formulae on spreadsheets.

165. Girls' standards are better than are those of the boys; this shows in teacher assessments in Year 9 and is verified by further evidence in students' computer work files.

166. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve standards in line with their peers. Teachers respond to need, using each student's individual education targets when they plan: this is working well. The school has recently purchased an independent learning system, to be used to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills for these groups of students. It is, however, too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

167. The gifted and talented do not benefit from specific planning to extend their skills. National Curriculum levels are not used with students in Years 7 to 9, therefore they do not know what they need to do to move ahead. The lack of help sheets in some classes also restricts progress, as students are dependent on teacher support rather than trying to solve a problem themselves.

168. In Years 10 and 11, students may now opt to take GNVQ ICT at foundation or intermediate level. This has created more interest in the subject from students and their parents. Those students not taking GNVQ complete the "European Computer Driving Licence" certificate, giving them working skills and showing understanding in the use of ICT.

169. Teaching in ICT lessons is good overall. The best teaching is in the sixth form. Generally the department uses good techniques to involve students in their learning. Through group work, brainstorm discussion and demonstration, students take an active part in classroom activities. For example in a Year 10 lesson, interesting research homework motivated their enthusiasm, but very slow computers that froze undermined the lesson. Students' frustration mounted but the teacher's effective classroom management and the swift response of the ICT technician saved the momentum of the lesson.

170. Teachers integrate literacy and numeracy planning into their lessons. This practice effectively builds basic skills teaching into computer use. Lack of standardising work across the team against National Curriculum statements restricts decision making on personal improvement. However, in Years 10 and 11, students use the criterion for a pass, a merit or a distinction to target what they need to do to improve, helping them to make decisions and to think.

171. In the sixth form, students respond well and take responsibility for their learning seriously. A lesson that focused on changes in retailing and the impact of computers was brought to life by a series of skilfully used pictures from the 1930s. Sharing this primary research triggered enthusiastic discussion in the class.

172. The learning resource centre and the careers department are two areas along with English, business education and special educational needs where computers are being used effectively. Students work independently researching and evaluating as well as using the Internet and intranet to raise their knowledge, skills and understanding. The department has successfully tackled the moral issue of acceptable use of the Internet through a letter to parents, and filtering the system.

173. The new head of ICT has shown generous personal commitment to the installation of a new room dedicated to an industrial-based, technical qualification, to be used by the sixth form and the community. However, the new well-qualified teaching team gets too little time to plan together. As a result, there is not enough opportunity for teachers to standardise their expectations of students' work.

174. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because of the lack of a department focus in the school, only just remedied, with new appointments made to form an ICT department. There are too few computers to meet the needs of the school, in particular cross-curricular use: the school ratio is half the national one. Training has not met the needs of the staff across all subjects.

175. ICT is a 'fledgling' department developing curricular opportunities to meet the needs of all students. There is growing confidence and interest across the school. To consolidate this position the fundamentals of improved time for computer work; the introduction of sufficient computers to underpin need and the essential clarity for the management of ICT is important, so the school can prepare students for their lives in a computer-rich society.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Good teaching helps to create good learning
- Fast track Spanish in Year 10 challenges the gifted and talented who do well.
- Strategies for improvement introduced by the new head of department are effective.
- Improved GCSE results in French and Spanish in 2001, particularly for boys in French and girls in Spanish are improving the profile of modern foreign languages.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures for Years 7 to 9 have not improved enough since the previous inspection.
- There are too few higher grades (A\* and A) in GCSE
- Very low numbers study two languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The students in Years 7 to 9 have not a sufficiently developed ability to read independently.

176. The proportion of students attaining higher grades, A\*-C, in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was above the national average in French. Girls were well above the performance of girls nationally, and the boys were broadly in line. In German the proportion of students attaining these grades was significantly above the national average, with boys and girls performing well above boys and girls nationally. The proportion of students attaining these grades in Spanish was below the national average. Boys were in line with the performance of boys nationally, but the girls were significantly below. The proportion of students attaining grades A\* to G was above the national average in all three languages. The results for 2001 show a significant fall by both boys and girls in German; more students had been entered than in the previous year and some of them had undergone frequent changes of teacher during the course. There was an improvement in the overall French results, particularly for boys, and a marked improvement in Spanish, with girls performing significantly better. However, few students obtained the highest, A\* or A, grades. Ninety-two per cent of the students on the gifted and talented GCSE course in Spanish, taken at the end of Year 10, obtained higher, A\*-C grades. Teacher assessments for 14 year-olds showed girls' performance at Levels 5 and 6 to be significantly higher than that of boys.

177. Classes in the sixth form are small, and all three languages are not offered every year. Two students obtained high grades in the French A-level examinations in 2000. The trend in French, taken over three years, is above average.

178. All students study a language in Year 7, French in one half-year group, and either Spanish or German in the other half. These two languages alternate each year. Most students have the opportunity to learn a second language in Year 8. Students' overall attainment in their first language by the end of Year 9 in French or Spanish is average. Achievement is satisfactory. Students have a good understanding of the foreign language, used in the classroom by the teacher. In oral work, students can respond to questions from the teacher, can participate in role-play conversations, asking and answering questions. Students in a Year 9 Spanish class gave good short responses about leisure activities, using the past tense. Pronunciation ranges from good to satisfactory. Students consolidate new vocabulary and constructions in writing, which is mostly accurate. Sometimes, however, there are mistakes in copying down new words, particularly those with accents, in both languages. Few students complete corrections to improve their accuracy.

179. The overall standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 in French, German and Spanish are above average. Students' achievement is good. There is a very wide range of attainment within the one GCSE class in French. Students have a sound knowledge of the topic vocabulary, but they are not always able to use this accurately in written work. In a letter to a lost property office, higher attainers were more consistently accurate than the others in the group. In a Year 10 class, students were able to speak about family members and they extended their sentences during the lesson. In German, higher attainers in the Year 11 class were confident speakers. They had a good pronunciation, and used the past tense confidently. They were able to combine their knowledge of the past tense with leisure activities to play battleships with their partner, asking questions of each other. Lower attainers, using similar constructions of time, manner and place, did not always implement them correctly and were, therefore, less accurate. They were less confident orally. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, students produced some extended responses, using past and present tenses, orally and in writing, although their pronunciation was approximate. Students in a Year 10 class gave short oral presentations about themselves, some from memory. In another Year 10 Spanish class, students, who had begun in Year 8 as a second language, spoke confidently about leisure activities and extended their oral responses with adverbs of time. Pronunciation ranges from satisfactory to good. Understanding of the foreign language used by the teachers is generally good in all three languages.

180. Classes in the sixth form are small; last year, for instance, there were no A-level classes in French or Spanish. This year, however, there are classes in all three languages in both years. Students' overall attainment by the end of Year 13 is above average in French, with the student making good progress. Attainment in German is average and students make satisfactory progress. In both languages, students are able to follow the lessons, which are all conducted in the foreign language. In the Year 13 French lesson, the only A-level candidate engaged in a very demanding conversation with the teacher about the recent explosion in Toulouse. In Year 12, the students were able to extend their vocabulary and knowledge in independent study with a dictionary, and they could correctly identify in a listening exercise the group to which a wide range of different news items belonged. Students in the Year 12 German lesson became more confident in using their knowledge of the topic vocabulary to identify the reasons for failed relationships in a magazine article. They were able to use some of the phrases to extend constructions using relative clauses.

181. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. They are well integrated into lessons, but the department has no in-class support. In general, teachers provide good support. However, in the Year 11 French GCSE class, which has a number of students with behavioural difficulties, it is very difficult to cater consistently for the needs of every student.

182. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall and sometimes very good. In a Year 7 German class, students gave a very good response to chorus work, but they were talkative whenever they changed tasks. Most students are keen to learn, respond well to their teachers and relationships are good. Students work co-operatively with each other, volunteer information, work well independently and listen well to cassette recordings. Positive attitudes provide a very good platform for teachers to build on. There are exceptions. In a Year 9 Spanish class, low attaining students did not respond sensibly to the game, which the teacher had to suspend, inhibiting learning.

183. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Some is very good. There is no significant variation between languages. Teachers' subject knowledge is good; two are native speakers. The foreign language is used satisfactorily in the classroom to present a challenge to students and to improve their skill of understanding. There is still room, however, for more use of it in a few lessons. Teachers' planning is good, their expectations are generally high,

and students are prepared well for their examinations. Lesson objectives are shared, so that students know exactly what is expected of them, helping to focus their minds. Not every lesson, however, ends with a crisp evaluation of what has been learnt. Teachers help students learn vocabulary and constructions effectively through – chorus work, working with partners in dialogues, role-play bingo, battleships or musical “pass the parcel”. Such activity helps to keep students alert, provide enjoyment and maintain their concentration. Teachers make good use of resources. The overhead projector and flash cards are used effectively to present a good visual stimulus to students, to introduce new vocabulary or to consolidate particular constructions, for example, the preterite tense in a Year 9 Spanish lesson and extending sentences in a Year 10 Spanish class. Work is complemented by well-produced worksheets. Good use is made of the 65-minute lesson with the introduction of different activities and different skills. One Year 10 French lesson, for example, had ten components and every objective was achieved. This brought pace and productivity into the lesson. By the end, students had consolidated their vocabulary, learnt several new expressions and had put it all into practice in a challenging oral task. Homework extends classroom learning effectively; tasks include learning vocabulary and constructions, or completing written work. In one class, students were encouraged to produce a written draft of their oral presentation on computer, so that work could be redrafted or increased. Tests in class ensure that students show how well they have learnt their work. In some classes, students are required to record their scores for tests and for listening exercises in their books, which helps them to monitor their own progress.

184. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. GCSE results have improved. Although changes in staff have taken place, teaching is now much more consistent in quality. Students make greater use of the language for classroom conversation. The new head of department has reorganised the subject and has adopted national schemes of work. Procedures for assessing Years 7 to 9 students’ work and the adoption of a reading scheme to help develop independent learning still remain areas for improvement.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

### Strengths

- The department enjoys effective leadership and very good planning.
- Good teaching and very good assessment produce high standards.
- A wide range of courses, through close collaboration with a neighbouring music school, provides exceptional opportunities for sixth formers.
- There are many opportunities to learn instruments in lessons and in out-of-school activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Students have too little experience in developing their own critical judgement and evaluation.
- Too large class sizes in Year 9 restrict learning.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to help learning.
- Students’ musical experience extends too little beyond Western classical tradition.

185. GCSE examination results continue to be above both the national and school averages. Overall standards have improved since the previous inspection from average to above average. Students’ positive attitudes and the respect they show for one another support this improvement in standards. They are willing to take initiatives, to shoulder responsibility and to use equipment with care, promoting their social, moral and cultural development effectively.



186. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average amongst 11 to 14 year-olds, 14 to 16 year-olds and in the sixth form. These above-average standards are achieved because teaching is always good and it is often very good. They achieve well as they progress through the school. Students' positive behaviour and attitudes contribute to the good quality of their learning. The improvement in course opportunities for the sixth form contributes strongly to the very good quality of learning at this level.

187. Students listen well from Year 7 and most of them retain what they have learned in previous lessons. They are able to maintain a regular rhythmic pulse and have satisfactory fluency when singing. Written answers to listening tests show a good knowledge of musical elements and students understand how these contribute to musical structures. A growing confidence in practical achievement typifies the good progress students make in Years 7 and 8, especially. In Year 9, written work is average, showing some knowledge of conventional notation and some good creative responses to listening. Most students understand how pitch, time signatures and rhythm are realised in performing and composing and answer questions using appropriate technical language. Crowded classrooms that have insufficient workstations inhibit progress in Year 9.

188. By Year 11, the students have a good prior knowledge and understanding of Western classical music and use technical vocabulary with impressive ease. While students are competent in identifying forms, styles and timbres in such music, their knowledge and understanding of non-western classical sources are much weaker. Performances show well above average achievement and students work together constructively in creative projects to combine successfully invention and technical skills. Baroque harmony, seen in Year 13, is fluent, but needs to be more supported by aural awareness. At all stages, students need greater confidence in talking about music, justifying critical opinions and more direct access to ICT.

189. The good quality of learning matches the good quality of teaching: it is promoted in lessons, which always build effectively upon what has been studied beforehand and which are challenging, helping the students to integrate key skills as well as contributing to the development of their literacy. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, both whole-class and group activities are well managed and helpful monitoring supports individual progress in performing and composition. Good quality, regular homework reinforces individual development. Work is well tailored to the needs of all students so, for example, those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress that is equal to that of others.

190. Leadership and management are very good. The department works to a very good development plan that equates closely with the whole school plan. Wide ranging schemes of work, based on National Curriculum and examination board requirements, advance the main skills of performing, composing and listening very effectively. All aspects of the organisation of the subject, including the timetables and monitoring of visiting instrumental teachers and out-of-school activities, are good. There has been an appropriate increase in the time allocated to music since the previous inspection, but classes are now larger and there are problems ensuring equality of opportunity as the accommodation and resources are not up to the demands now on them. Two sharing a keyboard does, for example, inhibit proper fingering techniques. The use of headphones makes monitoring difficult for the teacher and this leads to instances where the students pursue their own ideas to the detriment of the set task.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There is a very good range of games and other activities.
- High levels of involvement of students and teachers in out-of-school provision raise standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE are below average because of weaknesses in written work.
- Some classes taught outdoors are too large for effective learning.
- The inadequate number and size of in-door teaching spaces prevents a properly balanced curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9.

191. The proportion of students gaining higher grades, A\*-C, in 2000 at GCSE was well below the national average. It was close to average for those gaining grades A\*-G. Boys gained better results than did girls. Provisional results for A\*-C in 2001 are much closer to, though still below, the national average established in the previous year. The performance of boys matched national levels. The evidence of the inspection indicates that standards are higher for students of all ages than is indicated by the results of those taking examination courses. Good standards are demonstrated by the successes of teams and individuals at local, district and county levels in boys' and girls' football, in athletics, cricket and netball. Very good standards are achieved in dance lessons.

192. By Year 9, students have established good levels of skill in games such as basketball, football and netball and in gymnastics. In warm-up sessions, they show good knowledge of basic anatomy and physiology and can suggest and demonstrate appropriate stretching exercises. Good performance is based upon good understanding of basic techniques, willingness to practise and high levels of enjoyment. These positive attitudes help students to make good progress even when faced by new challenges in games of which they have little experience, as was evident in a class learning to serve in badminton. From early in Year 7, students respond to encouragement to make decisions and so gain confidence and understanding, for example in netball. Excellent learning occurred in a Year 7 dance class where high levels of enjoyment were matched by a confident willingness to experiment and a shared enjoyment of success. Students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are equally well helped and encouraged by teachers and by each other and this results in good progress.

193. In Years 10 and 11, students have good levels of performance skills. These were evident in a Year 11 trampoline lesson where students made very good progress because they were able to build upon skills and relationships firmly established earlier. Because of their good understanding of techniques, students were able to offer helpful advice to each other, which contributed to the very good quality of both their learning and enjoyment. Year 10 students, being taught techniques of self-defence, showed good levels of motivation and made very good progress. In both of these lessons, students demonstrated very good awareness of safety considerations, which is a strength of teaching and learning in the department. Students taking GCSE have good practical skills but written work is often unsatisfactory. Writing, including that of some otherwise capable writers, is marred by weaknesses of spelling and expression. Students sometimes do not recognise what is required of them in written work and their understanding often appears superficial when expressing opinions.

194. In all year groups, achievement in performance is good because students enjoy their work and want to raise their standards. They listen carefully to teachers and observe

demonstrations closely so that they understand the necessary techniques. Students are pleased by their successes and are supportive of the efforts of others so that they develop good levels of confidence. Almost all respond positively to the high expectations that teachers have of their effort, behaviour and progress. Some students were so carried away by enthusiasm that they failed to listen to explanations, reducing the progress of one Year 7 class. Although competitive, they observe the principles of fair play and they are never reckless of their own safety or that of others. Progress is less good when the size of groups is so large that the effectiveness of teaching and learning is reduced, particularly in outdoor games classes. Positive attitudes to games and other physical activities are evident in the high proportion of students who take part in out-of-school activities.

195. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A substantial proportion of it was very good with a little excellent. It was never less than satisfactory. The quality of learning is raised by the clear links that teachers make with earlier work and the way they evaluate what has been learned at the end of lessons. This helps students to understand the purpose of their lessons and enables teachers to reinforce their main teaching points. Teachers are consistently good at providing a variety of activities in practical lessons, which maintains good concentration, and at ensuring that students at all levels of attainment are appropriately challenged and supported. In the very best lessons, the quality of learning is very good because teachers have high levels of skill which students respect. Lessons are so well constructed and conducted at such a brisk pace that students know they are making good progress. They respond to opportunities to contribute to the lesson by answering challenging questions or providing demonstrations. They sustain effort and concentration when set difficult tasks in football. They act as sympathetic coaches or advisors to classmates in trampolining and gymnastics and show creative imagination in dance to invent individual sequences for incorporation into group performance. Students learn appropriate technical terms because they are used consistently from the time they enter the school: they are expected to use them correctly. Students taking examination courses have appropriate levels of practical skills and satisfactory understanding of basic anatomy and physiology. Many have difficulty, however, in assembling and expressing ideas about contemporary issues, such as the role of sport in society. To improve in this area, there is a need to identify more effective methods of teaching and learning and also to improve the quality of marking of work so that students know how to improve.

196. The work of the department benefits from good leadership and an appropriate sharing of responsibilities. The development plan, although insufficiently prioritised, indicates a clear identification of needs. Lack of sufficient suitable indoor accommodation means that schemes of work are dominated by games and the National Curriculum entitlement is not met for Years 7 to 9. The curriculum for students below Year 10 lacks a proper balance of experience of physical activity even though the range is good. Staff have a good blend of youth and experience and a very good range of specialist skills. Both specialists and colleagues from other departments give generously of their time to provide good opportunities for students out of lesson time. There is a good stock of small equipment and a sufficient range of equipment needed for gymnastics, except that extra modern springboards are needed.

197. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is more consistently good. Departmental planning has been improved. Dance has been successfully provided for boys in Year 7. Out-of-school provision and links with other schools, clubs and organisations have improved from good to very good. Limitations in the sufficiency, quality and size of the indoor accommodation continue to affect teaching and learning and upset the balance of students' experience in Years 7 to 9.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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

### Strengths

- Results in recent years have been well above national averages.
- Very large numbers of students study the subject at GCSE level.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students show very positive attitudes and behave very well.
- Management of the department is excellent.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of students.

### Areas for improvement

- More consistency is needed at the end of lessons in order to give students a clearer idea of their progress.
- Assessment in Years 10 and 11 needs to be sharper.
- More use should be made of ICT facilities.

198. In recent years, GCSE results have been well above national averages in both the higher, A\*-C and the full, A\*-G grade ranges with a significantly high proportion of students gaining the highest grades. This is a notable achievement and boys have been doing particularly well in this respect. In lessons seen and work analysed during the current inspection, standards are also high throughout the age range. During their first year at the school, students acquire a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity, and, as time goes by, of other major world religions as outlined in the locally Agreed Syllabus. In this respect, some very good project work was seen from Year 8 students on a visit to a local mosque. As a result of these advances in subject skills, students also become adept at debating and discussing spiritual and moral issues and they do so with confidence. There is a heartening emphasis on standards of literacy in all lessons, and, as a result, most students are able to replicate their oral progress in their writing, as was seen in some very impressive Year 9 projects on animal rights. By the time they reach the age of 14, standards for most students are above the level of expectations linked to the locally Agreed Syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, these high standards are maintained and there is a commendably high number of students studying the subject at GCSE level. In lessons, students develop their ideas on spiritual and moral issues to considerable depth. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 11 lesson, during which students examined the differences between Christian and Moslem marriage customs with great sensitivity. By the end of Year 11, many students are achieving very high standards, as is borne out by the GCSE results in recent years. The success and popularity of the subject is also attested by the large number of students who continue with religious studies in the sixth form.

199. These high standards are achieved through the quality of teaching that is very good overall. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have very high expectations of all students. As a result, there is an air of rigour and purpose to lessons wherein students are encouraged to become active learners. In this context, in a very good Year 7 lesson, students examined the concept of gestures and symbols in different religions and were very confident in their oral responses. Teachers use their subject knowledge very well to challenge and motivate students and a wide variety of techniques is used to support learning, including paired work, discussion, short written tasks, video and artefacts. This in turn encourages students to enjoy their lessons and, as a result, they make very good progress. This was demonstrated fully in an excellent lesson during which Year 9 students examined and discussed in depth the life of the Buddha. Aims and objectives of lessons are shared with students so that they know precisely what they have to do. In some lessons, students are also encouraged to

reflect on what has been achieved at the end of sessions. A more consistent approach to this good practice would benefit all students.

200. Students show very positive attitudes to the subject and are eager and willing to participate in lessons. They behave very well and show considerable respect for their teachers and for each other. The previous inspection report noted that more books were needed for higher-attaining students to use for research. Because they have been provided, higher-attaining students are now given ample scope to develop their talents in depth. Lower attaining students, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are supported well in classrooms but low literacy levels often hamper their written work. The department has clear plans to widen the variety of materials to suit individual needs.

201. The management of the department is excellent. There is also a very enthusiastic and dedicated teaching team to support learning and the department is to be congratulated on a recent national award for its provision. Departmental meetings are used very well to share ideas and good practice. Assessment procedures are used assiduously to monitor students' progress in Years 7 to 9. In other years, however, assessment does not have a sufficiently sharp focus to give students a clear idea of how to improve still more. Marking is thorough and gives students a very clear idea on how to improve their work and there is increasing use of self-assessment in this area. The learning resource centre has an excellent stock of materials to support learning in this subject. Religious studies make an excellent contribution to the personal development of students and there is a considerable emphasis on visits to different places of worship to enrich what is taught in class. ICT is used increasingly by teachers and students, but this area of the department's work needs to be developed more consistently. At present, students do not have adequate access to the use of computers. The previous inspection report concluded that teaching time for the subject was inadequate. This is no longer the case and provision for the subject now meets statutory requirements at all levels.

202. Overall, the department has maintained and built very well on the previous inspection report, which was also highly complimentary. Religious studies is a considerable strength in the school and the highly skilled teaching team has the ability and determination to build further on its undoubted success.

**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.

***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	1	1					
Business Studies	1	1					

***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	18	72	89	28	45	4.0	5.9
Biology	21	81	88	10	34	3.6	5.3
Chemistry	8	88	89	38	42	5.5	5.8
Design and technology Graphical Applications	11	0	16	45	81	1.6	3.9
Design and Technology Home Economics	13	23	24	77	81	4.0	4.6
Business Studies	13	100	91	8	30	5.8	5.3
Physical Education	12	42	25	83	91	5.3	5.0
Art and Design	14	100	96	50	45	7.2	6.4
Classics	8	100	94	38	46	6.0	6.4
Geography	13	100	92	54	37	6.6	5.7
Government and Politics	9	78	88	67	35	7.1	5.3
History	25	100	89	16	34	5.4	5.4
English Literature	56	100	96	54	36	6.8	5.9
Spanish	-	-	-	-	-	-	

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Subjects inspected in the sixth form were mathematics, chemistry and biology. Physics is also taught at A/S and A2 but was not observed during the inspection. However, sufficient work from the previous year was sampled to indicate good understanding of physics in the sixth form. The 16 students now doing physics in Year 12, and the 8 students in Year 13 are also doing other science and non-science subjects, and their views were well represented in interviews with a mixed group of sixth form science students. A grade BB at double award science is required to do physics in the sixth form. Owing to unsatisfactory results at the end of the first year of the new arrangements for A/S, the group size for physics has reduced from 11 to 8 students at the beginning of Year 13 in September 2001. Recruitment in mathematics has increased very substantially in 2001, breaking the pattern of comparatively small groups in previous years.

#### Mathematics

##### *Scope of the inspection*

A/S and A2 courses in 'Pure Mathematics and Statistics' and 'Pure Mathematics and Mechanics' are offered and provision can be made for the most talented mathematicians to take 'Further Mathematics' at A2 level.

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is unsatisfactory.

##### Strengths

- The teachers have a high level of knowledge of the subject.
- The attitudes of students to their work are very good.
- Students start the courses having obtained high GCSE results.

##### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards achieved in relation to GCSE results.
- Improve the proportion of students taking A2 courses.

##### *Standards and achievement*

203. Provision is unsatisfactory because too many students achieve grades that are lower than they should be and too many students do not pass the examination.

204. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average. Students' achievements in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form are poor. Teaching of mathematics in the sixth form is satisfactory and students' attitudes to their work are good. However, students make unsatisfactory progress in the sixth form because their foundations in understanding the applications of mathematics are weak.

205. In mathematics, results were below the national average in 2000 and students performed poorly in relation to the grades they had gained at GCSE. Four lessons were observed during the inspection, all of which were at least satisfactory. A good feature of two of these lessons was the willingness of students to formulate and test hypotheses, which is an important skill in their mathematical development.

206. Recently, the numbers of students taking mathematics course have been low, but this changed markedly in 2001. In the past, very few girls have taken mechanics courses, but an encouraging number are currently following this option in Year 12.

207. All students starting A/S courses in mathematics have achieved grade B or higher at GCSE. Consequently, all should be well prepared for their sixth form course. However, students do not consistently display competence and confidence at applying such skills to their work, as these results would indicate. This is because students have not developed their the use and application of mathematics sufficiently well before the start of the sixth form. An example is the insecurity of some students in solving quadratic equations. In a lesson introducing the laws of motion, students spent time reinforcing their algebraic skills and so learning new material at a reduced rate.

### ***Quality of education***

208. Students respond positively to their lessons. They are keen to learn and most enjoy contributing to discussions, formulating and testing ideas. This was exemplified by a student in Year 13 who positively relished testing out his ideas about a particle under variable acceleration with the teacher and his fellow students. The best lessons draw on this enthusiasm and feature development through a dynamic interchange between teacher and students. This was seen to good effect when students in Year 12 were developing the calculation of correlation coefficients. This feature greatly assists learning. However, one group was too large for students to develop such dialogues. Not only does this diminish learning but also places exceptional demands upon the teacher, firstly to meet the needs of all students in the class and secondly to ensure a high quality of assessment and marking.

209. Teachers of sixth form courses have high levels of mathematical knowledge, which meet the demands of the syllabuses and are a real strength. However, in some lessons, teachers spend too much time presenting information. In such lessons, students are not given proper opportunity to develop their own ideas or to practise skills. Teaching is good when students are encouraged to develop their learning independently of the teacher.

210. In 2001, too many students who had taken the A/S examination did not continue with the study of the subject in Year 13. Too many students did not pass the examination.

### ***Leadership and management***

211. The management of A/S and A2 courses in mathematics is satisfactory. Courses are well planned and fully cover the requirements of examination syllabuses. The head of department has kept abreast of developments in the subject. Students have sufficient resources to undertake their studies, including access to computers as appropriate. Class sizes are, however, too large in Year 12. The assessment of students' work is accurate and helpful. Action is required before the students begin their sixth form work in mathematics to make sure they have a satisfactory basis upon which they can tackle the requirements of the courses. There is a need to ensure that students are able to apply mathematical knowledge appropriately before the end of Year 11 and to reduce the size of A/S classes.



## Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- All the teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Good assessment informs students about how to improve.
- Good relations with the students help to raise standards.
- Good laboratories help to raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not value and use the students' ideas enough so they are not involved fully in their own learning.
- Over reliance on the use of printed notes restricts learning.
- The use of ICT in the laboratories is insufficient.
- The monitoring of value added between GCSE, A/S and A-level is under-developed.

### **Standards and achievement**

212. The A-level results for 2000 were below the national average. In 2001, the standards rose, the proportion obtaining top grades was 10 per cent with 90 per cent gaining a pass grade. Girls obtained more of the higher grades but, considering the results overall, there was little difference between the performances of boys and girls. In relation to their GCSE grades about half did as well or better than expected. Consideration of the last four years shows that standards are rising.

213. In the A/S examination for 2001 over a quarter of the students gained B or C grades with only one student failing to pass. The expectation is that A-level standards will continue to improve. Observation of lessons, scrutiny of students' work and examination of the records, together with comparing students' GCSE grades with predicted A-level grades, underscores the expected rise in standards and indicates satisfactory achievement for the present Year 13.

214. Students in Year 12 are only three weeks into their A/S course, consequently little ground has been covered. Nevertheless, most have made a sound start and they are, for example, able to discuss the structure and function of some cell organelles knowledgeably.

### **Quality of education**

215. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and it leads to satisfactory learning. The lessons are well planned with clear objectives; most start with a reinforcement of what was learned last time and conclude by testing the new knowledge. Teachers have a good command of the subject and so can enable their students to go for the higher grades. They assess students' work well, suggest ways of improving it and relate it to the standards required for examinations. This was well exemplified in Year 12 where essays were returned and their shortcomings discussed: then a mark scheme was presented together with some suggested new resources and they were invited to write them again. Teachers are good at presenting new knowledge and questioning to test how well it has been assimilated. Students are encouraged to use independent study time productively, to read and to field facts from a variety of sources. However, in lessons there is insufficient opportunity for students to produce their own ideas and to develop them with skilful teacher guidance. Thus there is a tendency for lessons to be dominated by the teacher promulgating facts. There is also an over reliance upon providing printed notes, which are then gone over, with students adding such things as diagrams from the board to them. Almost no use is made of ICT in teaching

and this is an area that merits urgent development. The homework is often challenging and provokes thought and research.

216. The students' learning is satisfactory. They work hard and most copy down facts assiduously when asked to do so. Good relations enhance their learning with teachers. However, learning and interest are not always used to the best advantage. For the most part, in lessons, students are not encouraged to think for themselves to generate ideas and to use them to drive the lesson towards its objectives. When they are required to take a more active part, such as in a Year 12 lesson on ribosomes, where they explained to each other how these organelles worked, then learning becomes more interesting and secure. Good learning often results from the out-of-lesson time assignments planned for the students. Large quantities of pre-printed notes do not develop their ability to work out for themselves what is important and how it fits together.

### ***Leadership and management***

217. The management of A-level biology is satisfactory. The courses are well planned and allow access to high grades for the higher attainers as well as being readily digestible by the more average and lower attainers. The curriculum is enhanced by a five-day field course at the end of Year 12, but lacks a programme of visits to places of biological interest. Whilst assessment of learning is good, the monitoring of the value added by the school between GCSE and A-level for individuals and its use for target setting is very underdeveloped. Other factors, which promote good learning, are the modern and spacious laboratories and the effective technician support. Apart from those for ICT and well-maintained microscopes, the resources are good. They are complemented by the excellent facilities available in the learning resource centre, which enable very effective independent learning utilising a wide variety of resources.

### **Chemistry**

Overall the quality of provision is just satisfactory.

#### **Strengths**

- Recent change and improvement in leadership with the re-established head of chemistry and new courses are starting to take effect.
- Teaching is good: subject knowledge is good and lessons are well planned and resources are used effectively.
- Marking and long-established, effective routines for assessment are positive and supportive.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Standards. Attainment has varied in the past and the proportion of students gaining passes in the A-B range at A-level is too low.
- Some resources are barely adequate, and generally of poor quality.
- The use of ICT is poor.
- There is insufficient debate and discussion among students during lessons.
- There is insufficient material to support the reliable calculation of value added for the pre-1999 groups.

### ***Standards and achievement***

218. At the time of the previous inspection, results in chemistry were below average. More recently, and with a more capable intake, standards in A-level examinations have gradually improved and, in 2000, were in line with the national average. However, with only two candidates attaining grade B, results in 2001 fell again. The proportion of successful candidates in A/S in 2001 was also well below what was expected and resulted in a large

drop in numbers, from 10 to 3, continuing into the present Year 13 A-level course. Important factors have impeded the students' progress in chemistry. Poor leadership and management in science over the past few years have left staff disheartened. The most recent group of students (2001 examination) was further disadvantaged because of shared teaching and the long-term absence of another teacher at a crucial time in the course. These resulted in the students' poor attainment at A-level. In the size of the sample, any slight differences in attainment between male and female students appear out of proportion in comparison with normal group sizes.

219. In lessons, the standard of work of today's students is at least equal to that nationally. In one lesson on chemical equilibrium, and the practical setting up of a stable equilibrium, Year 13 students demonstrated their clear understanding of the process and calculation of the equilibrium constant. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into the course and are achieving much as expected on structural formulae and the naming of alcohols. Lesson observations support a modest rise in standards. However, effective teaching is only one component of academic success and capability on entry, shortfall in resources and accommodation affect the level of students' success adversely.

### ***Quality of education***

220. Teaching is good. A very experienced teacher with excellent subject knowledge and understanding has very good relationships with the students. Expectations are high and students learn well, as a result. She uses time and resources effectively, also her range of successful teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond well. In each of the four lessons seen, preparation was very good and resulted in secure learning and successful attainment.

221. Students learn quickly. They are attentive, work productively and respond well. There is a general air of increasing maturity and responsibility among those in Year 13. Some students in Year 12 are hesitant and lack confidence in self-assessment of how they are doing. Study skills develop well; they include practical investigations, the competent handling of apparatus and equipment, and the building of confidence in written work, for instance, following detailed instructions on worksheets. The regular marking of work and the provision of supporting comment is satisfactory and students' efforts have improved throughout the year.

222. There is poor use of ICT, both in school and at students' homes. This is generally limited to word-processing or a simple interrogation of the Internet for information to support project work and private study.

### ***Leadership and management***

223. With the change in leadership and good technician support, the organisation and management of chemistry at A/S and advanced level is now effective and is making a significant contribution to successful learning by students. Able students are confident in explaining a range of difficult concepts to non-specialists and interested adults. The fine tuning of an already successful assessment, recording and reporting system will assist the further development of target setting, monitoring and evaluation. However, the information required for successful monitoring of the value added by the school is not available in an appropriate form and its use for target setting is underdeveloped. Sound contact with the examinations board, and other professionals, has resulted in an increased understanding of the requirements at examination time. Students enjoy chemistry and regularly chose to remain on the premises for further advice and guidance over the lunch period and at the end of the school day.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

### Design and technology

#### ***Scope of the inspection***

The inspection focus was on design and technology courses.

The provision in design and technology caters for 35 students following A/S and A-level courses in graphics and textiles. The food technology course is no longer taught.

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good learning by the students.
- Students achieve well in textiles.

#### Areas for improvement

- Both the accommodation and resources for graphics are poor.

#### ***Standards and achievement***

224. The most recent A/S levels show that students gained results that matched their results in other subjects. Two students gained an A/B grade in graphics, and four students gained those grades in textiles, only two gaining grades below those levels. These are good results. The most recent A-level results in graphics improved from 2000, when students gained no A/B grades. Three students gained those high grades in 2001. Standards in textiles were high in 2000, but the numbers taking the subject in the most recent examinations were so small that they did not reflect the usual high standards achieved. The retention rate in design and technology is good.

225. Observation of students in lessons and an analysis of a sample of their work in textiles confirm the high level of attainment in this subject. Observation of students in A-level graphics lessons also confirms the well above average standards achieved in the most recent examinations. At A/S level, not all students have taken graphics at GCSE, therefore standards are in line with expectations at this early stage in the year. Students research effectively, for example into different periods of fashion, such as the Arts and Crafts movement, and the influence of designers such as William Morris. Graphics students have a good understanding of the effect of the market on sales, which is strengthened by their knowledge of business economics. Textiles students have a good level of skills, and this was seen in the variety of garments made with difficult to use materials: the standard of design was high. For example, a dress suitable for a wedding was delightful, with subtle ornamentation on the organza. Students not only gain knowledge through books and the Internet, but also garment factory visits, from which they gain an understanding of manufacturing processes.

#### ***Quality of education***

226. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to extend students' understanding, for example into the complexities of projected sales for a new market product. They encourage students to research, to investigate, and to follow their own interests. This was very clearly shown with a new A/S graphics class. Within three weeks, groups had researched such diverse areas as the Shaker movement and the 'Egg' chair. They presented the results of their research, both pictorially and through a short, videoed talk, to the rest of the class. Students worked well together. Although exposure to a public presentation did create some tension, good learning took place, as most groups were

keen to evaluate both findings and presentation. Graphics coursework is of a high standard, with some designs spilling over into the borders, which adds to the quality of the presentation.

227. Students learn well. They are active learners, and by their questioning show a real interest in the topic. For example, they discussed the reintroduction of the yo-yo, and how the launch and interesting use of technology led to the high level of sales. Their interest extends into discovering for themselves. For example, students visited exhibitions such as those in the Museum of London and Kensington House. They respond positively to the demands that teachers make of them, and their work shows an increasing level of maturity.

### ***Leadership and management***

228. The department is well led and managed. Teachers enhance their own knowledge through attending relevant courses, and they are dedicated to their subjects. Students know their targets and strive to improve these. There are excellent resources for reference in the school's learning resources centre, which considerably enhances students' learning. However, the school does not provide a designated area for graphics students, with good quality drawing equipment suitable for sixth form students. Standards are undermined as a result.

## **Business studies**

### ***Scope of the inspection***

The focus of the inspection was on the substantial intermediate GNVQ and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), A/S and A-level courses in the sixth form.

The overall provision in business studies is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good and staff are very supportive of their students.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are positive and relationships constructive.
- Achievement is good.
- Students work well independently and in groups.
- Key skills are developed well on all courses.
- Specialist accommodation and learning resources are good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Assessment needs to be used more to inform curriculum planning.
- Discussions need to give a greater understanding of business concepts and to students' experiences.
- Not enough visuals are used.

### ***Standards and achievement***

229. Students receive a very good induction programme. They are highly motivated; very few leave before the end of the GNVQ Intermediate course, and they achieve well by the end of it. In recent years, these students have performed well, with above the national average point scores. A good proportion has attained merit or distinction grades and many proceed to an A-level course. Students' planning of assignments is well structured with a clear focus. The best work shows they can assess and evaluate a range of sources very well and that they are competent in judging outcomes against criteria. Key skills develop particularly well.

230. Recent advanced GNVQ results were broadly average, but the proportions obtaining the higher grades were above the national position. Current students studying the AVCE course are producing standards of work that are also broadly average. Many students work

hard, but find the requirements challenging. A few students are making exceptional progress. Achievement over time is good and some is very good. They are establishing a strong knowledge and skills base, but levels of application and understanding are often insecure.

231. The work of students on the A/S course is average. Students who have studied business studies for the GCSE examinations are generally achieving well. However, some other students new to the subject, are finding the work very challenging and do not as yet understand technical terms sufficiently well to satisfactorily complete some of their class work tasks. The A/S examination results in 2000 with low entry numbers showed all students successful in gaining an A-E grade, but none obtaining the higher grades. The average points score was low against the national picture. In lessons, A/S students are already learning the importance of business terminology and are starting to use it appropriately.

232. The work of students on the A2 course is of generally good standard. Students acquire very detailed and thorough knowledge of topics taught. Higher attainers understand particularly well concepts relating to economic aspects of the course. Average and lower attainers achieve in line with their ability. The course is well regarded by students for the valuable advice and guidance provided. It has a good skills base developed over the two years and some of the business management elements of the course are particularly well presented. Students' levels of critical analysis vary depending on the attainment levels, but more emphasis needs to be placed on developing this aspect of the course. Regular revision occurs in some course units, but a thorough well-monitored on-going programme of revision is needed for all units. In the last four years the number of students entered for the business studies A-level GCE course has been fairly constant. The A-E grades and average point scores have normally been above the national average for all schools. The proportion of students attaining the higher grades A and B in 2000 was below the national average.

### ***Quality of education***

233. Teaching in the GNVQ intermediate course is good. Some teaching is very good. Clearly structured, the lessons are well planned and teachers make sure the students understand what they are doing. Learning is consequently good and the students are thoroughly involved in their own learning. Teaching in AVCE lessons is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared with clear aims and built on a very sound knowledge base. However, the teaching does not adequately bring out ideas and facts that are within the students' experience. This results in many low attainers not understanding sufficiently the linkages made in the lesson and leading to some unsatisfactory learning. Teaching does not consolidate learning sufficiently through, for example, visuals on the board. Teaching in Year 12 A/S business studies is good. A strength of the teaching is the secure subject knowledge of teachers and good organisation, with work that develops students' self-knowledge well. Teaching on the A2 course is also good. Expectations are high and the pace and challenge very demanding. Skilful teaching guides students' thinking through some difficult concepts well. However, students' responses showed a need for the work to be expanded more thoroughly by, for example, clearer explanations on the board to improve learning.

### ***Leadership and management***

234. The department is satisfactorily managed with the GNVQ course well led. The work of the subject group is carefully monitored, but needs more rigorous evaluation of the impact of teaching on the students' learning. The assessment of sixth form courses is sound, consistent and well documented, but the use of assessment information does not inform curriculum planning. Documentation is sound, but there is need to establish a subject development plan which is annually evaluated. The department is staffed with competent subject specialist, many with relevant experience in business. The accommodation for business studies is good particularly that for GNVQ practical work. However, specialist rooms are widely dispersed and this somewhat restricts scope for professional dialogue.

Good quality displays including students' work provide an attractive and valuable learning environment. Except for the absence of a basic text for A/S students, learning resources are very good.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

### **Physical education**

#### ***Scope of the inspection***

There are no students taking the A-level course in the current Year 13, 5 students started the course but none completed the first year. In Year 12 there are 11 students taking the A/S course.

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

#### **Strengths**

- An experienced course leader was appointed this year.
- The committed team wants to improve.
- Some very good teaching takes place.
- A good choice of practical activities from which students can select their particular area of study increases motivation.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The monitoring of teaching to ensure consistent levels of expectation and a greater range of methods to motivate students and encourage their independence as learners are under-developed.
- Better induction is needed in Year 12 to support individual learning needs at the start of the A/S course, including greater use of ICT and the learning resource centre.

#### ***Standards and achievement***

235. In 2000 A-level students did well in relation to national averages for higher grades (A-B) but below for overall passes (A-E). In recent years, results have gradually been improving until this year. Unconfirmed results for this year fell both for higher grades and passes overall. Students from a wide range of ability take A/S and A-level physical education. When compared with other subjects in the school, students' performance in physical education in the last three years has declined from above many other subjects to below this year. This year in relation to their previous attainment, students did not achieve what might be expected.

236. Inspection evidence from lessons, discussions and students' folders shows most have made a sound start at this early stage in the course. They are beginning to use technical language accurately, for example in the anatomy and physiology unit. A few students need more support. They do not order their work clearly; note making and additional personal research needs more structured guidance at this early stage. When the teacher manages the class discussion, to ensure all are involved, students are interested and both boys and girls contribute well. When discussions are unstructured then some students are withdrawn and make little contribution and opportunities for shared learning are missed. A small number of students in Year 13 have started the Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA) and are making good progress in this course. All students in the sixth form have a weekly practical physical education lesson as part of their enrichment studies. There is a good choice of activities and these sessions are well attended. Sixth form students are also active participants in the wide range of house sporting events.

### ***Quality of education***

237. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Some very good teaching was observed but most is satisfactory. Teachers consistently outline what is to be covered at the start of the lesson and confirm these objectives at the end to ensure they know what students have learned. The most effective teaching employs a wide range of methods that sustains students' interest and motivation. Then the response of students is lively and they are required to think and contribute their own ideas in discussions. In these lessons students are challenged by the work and make good progress. In a very good lesson introducing the concepts of skill and natural ability, the teacher used students' answers to draw out the key differences. This was reinforced with a clear analysis on the board and led to the introduction of future work on how physical skill is learned. The rate of students' learning in this lesson was good. In most lessons teaching is less demanding. Whole-class discussions are not used well and occasionally result in loss of focus, so the progress made by students is only steady. Questioning by teachers in these lessons does not sufficiently probe students' understanding and build on their previous knowledge and experience of physical education. There was some evidence in students' work and lessons of the use of ICT to encourage independent study and research, but this is not a strong feature of the physical education course.

### ***Leadership and management***

238. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A new course leader and team of teachers are committed to raising standards and teachers are undertaking training related to examination courses. Currently four teachers teach the course. Separate teachers for the theoretical and practical aspects teach the personal performance module and opportunities for reinforcing learning are missed. The course leader is aware of the need to monitor teaching so that all teachers have consistent levels of expectation of students.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus of the inspection was on art and design. Work in the performing arts course was also sampled and lessons seen in drama and dance. Students are enthusiastic and achieve well. In a very good dance lesson the students worked extremely hard to create and refine their dances based on ideas taken from 'street activities'. They produced lively dances and the quality of their performance skills in dance is improving rapidly.



## Art and design

### **Scope of provision**

The school offers courses at A/S and A-levels. The inadequate accommodation and limited resources inhibit further potential expansion.

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and ensures good learning by all students.
- Assessment is thorough and the support given matches students' needs.

#### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is poor: it limits excessively the range of work.
- Students have too few opportunities for both two and three-dimensional work on a large scale so their skills are not sufficiently developed.

### **Standards and achievement**

239. Overall standards are average: half of the students entered gained grades (A-B) with five students gaining A grades. The most recent GCE A-level examination results were satisfactory. The A/S level examination results provide a good foundation for A-level study with the retention rate of students being close to average.

240. The work of current students is average with Year 12 showing an upward trend. The quality of work in students' portfolios confirms these standards. Students speak eloquently and with confidence about their work and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Their independence enables them to be trusted to manage their studies in working towards examinations. Some students display some ability and understanding of ICT in their assignment work. Art and design portfolios show that most students have carried out thoughtful investigation and creative exploration of ideas. Work in sketchbooks shows good annotation and an understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for project development. Students' preliminary sketches show a good understanding of design principles, but development into finished design is inconsistent. Students show satisfactory gains in comparison with their previous attainment. Initially in Year 12, students sustain much of their interest and skill from their GCSE work. This was evident in a lesson based on figure drawing, where the recording of movement and art history connections were successfully observed. Judgements on proportions and spatial layout were good and students were eager to discuss their coursework and success in the GCSE examination. In Year 13, students demonstrate some technical knowledge and skill in drawing and painting, but rarely apply this on a large scale. Progress is well promoted by the demands of the work and guidance offered.

### **Quality of education**

241. The quality of teaching is always good, often very good, and has improved since the previous inspection. The four art and design teachers have good knowledge and technical skill. Many students speak well of the support provided by teachers. In the best lessons students are set work that challenges them and to which they respond with enthusiasm. Expectations are high and teaching methods appropriate. Teachers integrate theory and practical work most effectively. Project briefs are well designed and give clear aims and objectives. Some good quality visual resources are used in the teaching of critical studies. Teachers give appropriate attention to presentation skills. This was evident in a Year 13 lesson, where students were making their own paper for the presentation of critical studies. Teachers monitor students' work thoroughly. Assessment criteria are well defined and deadlines for completion of work are made clear. Assessment procedures involve a variety of

methods that build progressively on students' knowledge and give them the confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. Students are generally clear how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Consequently, they understand what is required of them and work at a good pace making good progress. Visits to galleries locally and in London have extended students' knowledge of art and design, including aspects of contemporary practice.

### ***Leadership and Management***

242. The quality of leadership and management is good. Courses are well managed. The newly appointed head of department is ensuring communications between teachers are effective. Teachers compare their experiences of the new A-level units and share best practice. There is, however, no overview of a student's progress in each of the different units. The stocks of reference materials held within the department are satisfactory. Accommodation is poor and does not allow for work on a large scale or visual stimulation through facilities for display in two and three dimensions. There is no provision for clay work and technician support is insufficient. The present library resources, such as books and ICT facilities have a positive effect on teaching and standards. The teachers understand developments in higher education and vocational routes in art and design. Students have good career advice.

## **HUMANITIES**

In humanities the focus of the inspection was on geography, classical civilisations, history and government and politics. A lesson was also observed in religious studies. The religious studies course is a popular choice at both A/S and A-level; currently there are two large groups in Year 12. Results in 2000 were very high: of the 15 students entered, almost half gaining A or B grades. Teaching of the subject is very good and students' attitudes to their studies are excellent. Overall provision for religious studies in the sixth form is excellent.

### **Geography**

Overall the quality of sixth form provision in geography is very good.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students' positive approach, intellectual effort and productivity of work contribute significantly to the good standard of learning.
- Recent A-level results have shown a noticeable improvement.
- Learning resources are good.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Some teaching needs to be related even more closely to the learning needs of students.
- The assessment of students' work needs monitoring rigorously and targets set for improvement.
- Study skills, including selective note making, need developing further.

### ***Standards and achievement***

243. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above the national average on the A/S course. On the A2 course, most students were working above the national level with a number of students well above it. Students achieve well in both courses. Although early in the academic year, the standard of work evident in A/S classes is impressive, particularly in the physical geography section of the course. Students enjoy learning; they acquire new knowledge quickly and, by the end of Year 12, their knowledge of what they have learnt in both physical and human geography is very good. By the end of Year 13, they work with

confidence on their own, research information obtained from a variety of sources, and form sound judgements from the data. Students in both Years 12 and 13 use map presentational skills well to support their practical work, which is generally of good standard. Students organise themselves well and develop a good grasp of geographical ideas. However, some students need more practice and support in study skills, such as how to be selective in making notes from written and visual sources and how to focus these on assignment requirements. Higher attainers have good analytical and evaluative skills, but low attainers have difficulty in identifying how the work they are doing fits into a broader picture.

244. In the last four years the number of students entered for the A-level geography course has varied from low to average, but numbers have greatly increased since the establishment of the A/S course. A-level results at grades A-E have generally been above or well above the national average for all schools. The proportion of students attaining the higher A and B grades in 2000 was well above the national average, as has been the case in most recent years. The subject is much more popular with boys than girls at A/S and A2 levels.

### ***Quality of education***

245. Students' attitudes to their studies on the whole are very good. In lessons, students work conscientiously, concentrate well and persevere to understand quite challenging concepts. Behaviour is always very good and shows appropriate maturity. Students are able to work well independently and collaboratively when undertaking enquiry. In some lessons, students are passive rather than active participants in discussion, often because the teachers are new to them.

246. Most teaching in the sixth form is good and some is very good. Lessons have a very clear structure and resources in the form of geo-file and other materials, ICT, maps and diagrams are used effectively. Teachers' good subject knowledge provides valuable extra information to individual students irrespective of attainment level. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons have good pace and productivity. They are best when students are directly involved in their own learning and discuss their analyses in groups, prior to explaining to the whole class. Work assignments are regularly marked and students are given accurate judgements on the standard of work produced. They also are informed of how work can be improved. However, the process is not rigorous enough, as identified targets for improvement are not monitored for individual students.

247. Students generally learn well. They progress very well over the two years, with higher attainers developing good synthesis skills. However, students need to be more selective when making notes. At times they fail to refine knowledge, applying it without clear understanding. At times, learning is shallow, failing in case studies to be broadly applied to an understanding of geographical patterns.

### ***Leadership and management***

248. The sixth form courses run effectively and are competently managed. All those teaching work at this level do so well. Most are experienced in sixth form teaching and have adjusted appropriately to meet students' needs. Newer teachers appreciate the need to modify teaching styles to students' learning needs. Learning resources available for the A/S and A2 courses are good. The decision by the head of department to provide study space for students, using resources available in the department's resource base, is excellent. Given the serious difficulties of finding space for private study elsewhere in the school, this action is greatly appreciated by A2 students.

249. The department does need to provide a more detailed induction to the sixth form so that students are more informed not only regarding the nature of the A/S course but also the mode of teaching and learning.

## **Government and politics**

### ***Scope of the provision***

The provision in government and politics caters for some 40 students following A/S and A-level courses.

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is very good.

#### **Strengths**

- Results show a marked improvement over time.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent grasp of subject material.
- There is an increasing number of students studying the subject.
- Students participate in debate with maturity and eloquence.
- There is a well-used wealth of resource material for the subject in the learning resource centre.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Students would benefit from more small group work opportunities.
- Schemes of work lack sufficient detail.
- ICT is underused as a resource.
- A programme of visiting speakers would enrich the curriculum.

### ***Standards and achievement***

250. In this subject, examination results have improved considerably over time and, in the year 2000, results were very high, particularly for the proportion of students achieving the highest grades at A-level. The standards reached by students as seen in the current inspection are also above average both in terms of oral attainment in lessons and in their written work. In Year 12, students on the A/S level course are developing a sound understanding of the central ideas of citizenship, democracy and participation, and can use contemporary examples culled from newspapers and other media sources to support their arguments. Students' files are very well organised and, as a result, most make very good progress during their first year of study. In this context, some very good essays were seen on whether or not traditional methods of protecting civil rights in this country are adequate, citing the role of the Ombudsman and recent miscarriages of justice. These high standards are maintained and built on in the Year 13 A2 course and there is ample evidence here from students' work that independent research skills are being developed well. A high proportion of last year's students progressed to higher education to read politics or other related subjects.

### ***Quality of education***

251. The quality of teaching in the subject is very good. Teachers use their subject knowledge and their enthusiasm very well to promote successful learning. Lessons are planned well with clear aims and objectives that are shared with the students. Expectations in both year groups are high and, as a result, students develop the confidence to ask questions and to participate fully in lessons. Teachers make very good use of debating techniques to develop students' knowledge of topics to a greater depth. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 12 lesson when students debated the arguments for and against protest movements in a democracy with vigour, commitment, and considerable skill. There is an air of academic rigour to lessons and students respond to this very well. They are mature in their oral responses and are eager to take part in class discussions. Teachers ensure that all students make a contribution in lessons, but the positive ethos created would be further enhanced by more opportunities for students to engage in group work. Praise and encouragement are used to very good effect and, as a result, lessons are imbued with a

sense of enjoyment as well as purpose. This was demonstrated very well in a lively Year 13 debate on the reasons for a Republican victory in the recent USA presidential election. In this lesson, students were encouraged to question the original premise and to debate in depth the intricacies of the electoral system in the USA.

### ***Leadership and management***

252. The two members of staff who teach government and politics manage the subject well and there is a heartening increase in the uptake of the subject in both year groups. Monitoring of students' progress is very thorough, but detailed schemes of work are not yet fully developed. There is a very wide range of materials to support learning in both years and the learning resource centre is a major contributory factor in this area. As yet, however, ICT and the Internet as a resource for learning need a sharper focus in terms of analysing how to use the wealth of information now available. Students from both years attend conferences on relevant topics and a programme of visiting speakers would further enrich their learning experiences.

253. Overall, this is a very successful area of sixth form provision and it is becoming increasingly popular. It is taught very well and, as a result, standards are high and students make very good progress.

### **Classical civilisations**

#### ***Scope of the subject***

Classical civilisations is a buoyant A-level subject, with 25 students split fairly evenly between Year 12 and Year 13. The subject is also offered at GCSE where a small Year 11 group was also inspected. The school did not promote the subject for Year 10, anticipating the extended maternity leave of absence of the only teacher. A part-time, qualified replacement teacher, without recent experience, took up her duties on the day the inspection began.

Overall, the quality of provision in classical civilisations is satisfactory.

#### Strengths

- Most students, especially those from an ethnic minority background, are keen to learn.
- A-level results are consistently in line with national averages and the students often do better than their previous attainment suggests they will.

#### Areas for improvement

- Learning activities used in each lesson are too restricted.
- Techniques used to assess how well the students are learning in each lesson need refinement.
- The new teacher needs help to make sure lessons are more stimulating and make greater demands on the students to work independently.

#### ***Standards and achievement***

254. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory: A-level results have been consistently in line with national averages since then. For many students, this shows good achievement considering their attainment when they started the course: they outstrip forecasts of how well they might do when their previous GCSE performance is taken into account. The 2001 A/S results were lower and did not show such improvements, but there are no national figures yet available against which to make broader comparisons. A scrutiny of written work and classroom observations show average attainment overall. Year 13 students' written work is well up to the standards attained in their recent A/S examinations; they are able to analyse text and produce relevant points to make an argument. Over time, their insights both into Greek and Roman mythology and into examination techniques improve at a satisfactory rate. Because the students are keen to learn, they try hard. Most show clearly by their occasional responses that they have satisfactory knowledge of the themes under consideration, being aware, for instance, of the inevitability and finality of fate and the inter-play between the gods and man in earlier societies. The careful, effective marking by the teacher helps the students to achieve well. The accuracy of written work is satisfactory, although grammatical errors sometimes spoil otherwise interesting writing. Presentation is satisfactory and many students use ICT effectively to improve their work, exemplifying their good attitudes to the subject. Reading is satisfactory in Year 13, but in other years, the students' understanding of the texts they are reading is often weak.

#### ***Quality of education***

255. The quality of learning and of teaching is just satisfactory, but current teaching techniques need careful monitoring to make sure they continue to stimulate the students' interest. Lessons are prepared, but the range of learning activity in each is not broad enough: the balance of lessons is unsatisfactory. There are too few demands made on the students to work collaboratively or to research on their own: the use made, for example, of the learning resources centre and of ICT to help learning is infrequent. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject and course requirements are satisfactory, enabling the students' interest in the work to be sustained. Students from an ethnic minority background are particularly interested. They stand out in Years 12 and 13 both in responding to or in asking questions spontaneously, their fascination with mythology in other cultures spurred by the importance often attached to it in their own. As a result, they learn well. Because the lessons are often too rigidly structured with too much time given to reading aloud and not enough to discussion, more diffident students feel unable to pursue an interest during the lesson, preferring to question the teacher or make relevant observations after its end. The purposes of each lesson are not shared clearly enough with the students, with no references to progress, nor is there a suitable resume at the end. The school's teaching and learning policy is not put into practice. As a result, the teaching does not assess its own effectiveness or how well the students are learning. When teaching introduces extra stimuli, for example to

increase the impact of the death of the Trojan high priest and his sons, learning is good. The students were keen to discuss not only the symbolic significance of the occurrence but also the merits of classical statuary to commemorate the incident. The contribution the subject makes to the students' cultural development is substantial. The management of students' learning is good; there are no incidents of misbehaviour, though the teaching taxes the concentration spans of many.

### **Leadership and management**

256. In the absence of the teacher responsible for the organisation of the subject, line management's job in monitoring is crucial. A scheme of work has been compiled, but it does not lay enough stress on the expected range of teaching techniques.

### **History**

Overall the quality of provision in history is good.

#### **Strengths**

- The expertise and experience of the teachers raises standards.
- Support and monitoring of the progress of students are very good.

#### **Areas for improvement.**

- Independent enquiry is under developed.
- The range of teaching and learning styles does not make enough demands on students.

### **Achievements and standards**

257. The GCE A-level examination results for 2000 were below average for the proportion of students achieving the highest grades, however all students gained at least a pass grade. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades rose in 2001 and was well above the 2000 national average. Once again all students achieved at least a pass, with boys achieving a higher proportion of the highest grades than girls. Results have fluctuated over the last four years. Students entered the A/S level examination for the first time in 2001; results are likely to be above the national average for the proportion of students achieving the highest grades and the pass rate overall. Very few students chose not to continue to the full A-level course this year, and the course has been also followed by students from Year 13 who wished to undertake a one-year history course.

258. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work indicate that the standard of their work is average for A-level students, with a significant proportion achieving a standard above average. There is a wide ability range and students are benefiting from the contributions of the higher-attaining students who lift the level of debate. In lessons, where there was skilful and effective questioning, students rose to the challenge to develop their responses and justify their opinions. At such times students achieved a high level of concentration and depth of thought. The standard of response is lower when the level of response accepted by the teacher is too low and the emphasis is placed upon the acquisition of facts rather than students own analysis of them. By Year 13, students are developing their skills of selection and organisation of information, and they use it to compose arguments for and against statements made. Higher-attaining students use specific detail to support their points, lower-attaining students use generalisations. Students display confident use of source material and their skills of interpretation and evaluation are developing well. Students review history, using information from the past and, with the clarity of hindsight, comparing it with recent evidence. They can compare these views and suggest reasons for differences between them. A good example is their understanding of the appeasement of Hitler by Chamberlain, prior to the outbreak of war. Students make notes and arrange information, however the highest standard of note making is in the use of lesson

summaries and the identification of key points by some students, after their lessons. Students are confident in their research and, coupled with the high level of support offered by teachers, they achieve a high standard in their investigations for coursework.

259. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but have made good progress. Identification of the key elements in an essay title is good, although the use of analysis rather than generalisation is undeveloped by some students. Using information provided by the teacher, students can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the administration of Pitt the younger, and make links between his rise and the reign of George III. They use their knowledge gained at GCSE level to supplement investigation of the effects of the Treaty of Versailles and its effects upon the German Weimar Republic.

260. Overall, the teaching of A/S and A-level history is good and, as a result, students learn well. Teachers show good subject knowledge through their questioning and explaining. High expectations by most teachers stimulate students to develop their own ideas and understanding of the periods and issues they study. The very good relationship between teachers and students develops into a partnership, and students clearly have confidence in their teachers. The pace of lessons is brisk and businesslike, and usually involves dialogue between teachers and students. Where the dialogue becomes a monologue punctuated by short questions the concentration of students is diminished and learning is reduced. A limited variety of teaching styles was observed, question and answer dominating the lessons. However, the support for the development of basic skills is good.

261. Students learn well. They have a responsible attitude towards their work. They are punctual, attentive and respectful towards their teachers. They appear well motivated and cooperate with their teachers and with their peers. Where teacher intervention is skilful, students rise to the challenge of defending their ideas and demonstrate mature thought and consideration of the issues. Most are able to express their opinions clearly and with growing confidence. When questioning is more mechanical and less challenging, students become more passive receivers of information and explanation. ICT is used for research and for presentation and students are confident in its use. Those who are less confident in their work are encouraged by their teachers and supported by their peers.

262. The work of the department is well managed and the support given to students is good. The standard of work is well monitored and students are aware of their progress towards their targets. Feedback from some teachers on essays and examinations is very thorough and enables a student to understand clearly how to improve each assignment. The learning resource centre is well stocked and used. Attendance at A-level conferences and the involvement of the 'Holocaust Education Trust' provide excellent stimulation and development in understanding. The 'Holocaust Survivors Day' provides an excellent opportunity for students to consider living history and its effects upon individuals, as well as to reflect on moral and spiritual issues.



## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and Spanish. Two lessons in each of German and French were also sampled and reference is made to them in the paragraphs on modern foreign languages in the 11 to 16 section of the report.

### English

#### ***Provision in the subject***

The subject is popular and attracts large numbers of students. They are very well taught and achieve very well, with no A/A/S students failing and with a large proportion achieving high grades.

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

#### Strengths

- Academic leadership is excellent and there is a good sense of educational direction.
- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships and students benefit from very high levels of personal tuition and guidance
- Very high standards of teaching create a wide range of challenging assignments that result in very good progress by students who are very well prepared for examinations.

#### Areas for improvement

- Group sizes are too high in some classes

#### ***Standards and achievement***

263. In 2000, A-level examination results were well above average. All 56 candidates obtained a pass, with half obtaining an A or B grade. In 2001, all A-level candidates obtained a pass and very nearly half of them obtained an A or B grade. At A/S level in 2001, all students obtained at least a grade D, and half of them obtained a highest, A or B, grade. The staying on rate from A/S Level to A2 (the full Advanced Level) is above the national average.

264. Lesson observations and analyses of written work confirm the well above average examination results. Students show genuine perception when faced with difficult texts. In discussion, they build on one another's ideas and their judgements are based in a sound understanding of critical values, genre, period and the writer's intentions. Their academic written work is of a similarly high standard and they also benefit from opportunities to develop their creative writing skills. All students use the learning resource centre systematically and their taught research skills are monitored effectively. Research involves, for example, a critical use of the Internet by questioning the accuracy and value of the downloaded material.

#### ***The quality of teaching and learning***

265. The quality of teaching is very good; some is outstanding. A strong team of able teachers communicates both enthusiasm for literature and enjoyment of shared intellectual challenge. Students respond very well and confidently explore ideas or defend their point of view. The same enthusiasm shows itself for the new elements of sixth form syllabuses like a "synoptic" approach to literature or the study of semantics on the language and literature course. Students are given clear and helpful guidance on the most profitable ways to approach a text while being encouraged to express their original, personal responses. Lessons contained a variety of activities, for the whole class, for pairs and for small groups, with a mixture of note-making, discussion and creative writing. Written work is marked accurately and students receive accurate judgements on the quality of their work and suggestions about how it might be improved. Many students benefit from private tuition in extra lessons after school.

266. Students learn very well. Boys and girls achieve equally well, although girls outnumber boys. At all times, they are actively involved and under pressure to explore further or to justify their observations with more precise reference. The intellectual challenge and the pace are sustained. When interviewed, they are positive about the way they learn and about their progress. They can talk authoritatively about the studied topics and can identify similarities and differences between different texts, authors and genres, for example between Ralph Ellison and Alice Walker. Students work together effectively. They use reference resources, including the Internet, well. There is a growth in intellectual maturity between the first and second years of the A-level course.

### ***Leadership and management***

267. The academic leadership of the subject is excellent and the combined strength of the teaching promotes very high standards and quality. Work is very well managed. Teachers work in teams of two, one of which includes the head of sixth form. Collaboration between the teams is very good, with regular meetings for curriculum planning and sharing of good practice. There are good stocks of texts and critical works held within the department. In addition, classes and individual students make very good use of the learning resource centre, which is well staffed and well equipped to provide a range of additional reference materials. Assessment of students' progress is undertaken well and their personal targets are frequently revised.

## **Spanish**

### ***The scope of the provision***

Provision in Spanish is at an early stage of development, having been introduced only in September 2000. It is catering for small groups at the moment. However, it is being offered in both Year 12 and Year 13. There is only one course available currently, leading to the GCE A/S/A2 qualification.

Overall, provision for this subject is satisfactory.

#### **Strengths**

- Work in the subject is well led, and a range of appropriate resources is being built up.
- Teachers present students with excellent models of language.
- Higher attaining students are achieving good levels of speaking and listening comprehension.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- As groups are shared between the two staff, they should aim for a greater consistency in teaching quality.
- Increase the level of active participation of students in some lessons.
- Develop strategies to support lower-attaining students insecure in their knowledge of grammar.

### ***Standards and achievement***

268. There are no results for the year on which this report is based (2000), as the subject was not offered until September of that year. In 2001, seven students took the A/S examination in Spanish. Two boys achieved Grade E results and elected not to proceed to the A2 course in Year 13. The remaining five students, all girls, achieved a wide spread of results ranging from Grade A to Grade E. All have continued to study the language this year, working towards the GCE A2 qualification. Overall, and taking into account the extremes, attainment is below average.

269. Observation of and discussion with students in lessons confirms this wide spread of attainment. In Year 13 higher-attaining students can sustain speech and present personal points of view confidently. Their pronunciation and intonation are good as a result of their exposure to the consistently good models of language presented by their class teachers. Errors, when they do occur, tend to arise from a desire to attempt to use more complex language. Lower attaining students show an insecure knowledge of grammar, and although they can communicate ideas and opinions it is with lower levels of sophistication. Based on work seen, attainment in Year 12 is below average. Responses to reading comprehension questions reveal gaps in students' knowledge of vocabulary, and they experience difficulty with the complexity and speed of delivery of some listening material. Some students are hesitant in oral work and make basic errors. The wide range of attainment in both years reflects the open entry policy of the school, as some students proceed to A/S and A2 work from relatively low levels of attainment at GCSE.

### ***Teaching and learning***

270. Teaching overall is satisfactory. There is some good teaching and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, owing to a lack of experience in teaching at this level. Good lessons have clear aims which are shared with the students: Spanish is used almost exclusively; a variety of media supports learning; expectations are high; the lesson proceeds at a brisk pace; there is a variety of tasks and activities, which encourage students to acquire and practise skills well. The level of challenge is high, for example in an activity where students were required to draw a statement at random from a bag and give an instant response to it. Unsatisfactory teaching is because material is too hard for students; planning is unsuitable; the focus of the lesson moves on before material has been fully consolidated; the content of the lesson is not adjusted to the learners' difficulties; students spend too much time copying information.

271. Students of Spanish are attentive and show interest in the language. They respond readily to questions and in discussion can sustain and develop their opinions well, although some lower-attaining students are reticent. Their research skills are being developed so that they can access the Internet to find background information to help prepare for assignments. Their spiritual, moral and cultural awareness develops through appropriate course materials and the structure of the examination specification they are following.

### ***Leadership and management***

272. Work in the subject is well led and represents good progress, given the recent appointment of the subject leader and the recent introduction of the subject into the curriculum. All students have access to modern textbooks that contribute significantly to their learning. Recent results have been analysed with a view to setting realistic targets for students, and the outcomes of this analysis are beginning to feed into teachers' planning for a greater variety of teaching and learning styles.