

INSPECTION REPORT

WILSTHORPE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Long Eaton, Nottingham

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112935

Headteacher: Mr D F Smith

Reporting inspector: Mr A A Henderson
2941

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th October 2001

Inspection number: 189185

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Derby Road Long Eaton Nottingham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms K Davison
Date of previous inspection:	16/09/1996

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22985	J A Sparkes	Team inspector	Science	
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11966	J Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
5851	M Robottom	Team inspector	History Business studies	
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11975	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wilsthorpe Community School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11–18. It is gaining in popularity, and is now slightly larger than average with 1097 pupils on roll, evenly distributed between boys and girls, and including 132 students in the sixth form. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, with the majority from five main feeder primary schools. Five per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, in line with about half of schools nationally, although only two come from homes where English is not the spoken language. Pupils coming into the school include the full range of ability, but overall attainment on entry is below average. The attainment on entry of the current Year 7 is higher than previous years, but is still below average. 19 per cent of pupils are on the register for special educational needs, which is average, whilst the proportion with formal statements is above average at 4.4 per cent. The school serves a mixed catchment area which includes some significant social and economic disadvantage. Despite this, only 11.5 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wilsthorpe Community School is providing an acceptable education for its pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Standards are below average, but given their starting points, pupils' achievement is reasonable. GCSE results have been improving at a similar rate to the national trend. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. The leadership provided by the new headteacher is very good, and there is now a clear agenda and momentum for improvement. The developing strengths of the school are balanced by some key areas for improvement. It is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision for the expressive arts (art, music, drama) is good.
- Standards in drama are above average.
- The school is very well led and managed by the recently appointed headteacher.
- Financial planning and control are very good.
- Reports to parents on pupils' progress are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics are too low.
- The inconsistency of teaching and learning between, and within subjects.
- Skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology require a more concerted development across the school.
- Information technology does not meet National Curriculum requirements in Years 10-11.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10-11, and is having adverse effect on progress and attainment in these years.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils are unsatisfactory, and slow progress in the classes concerned.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in 1996, improvement has been just satisfactory. Although standards and attendance have not improved sufficiently, the wide-ranging initiatives and improvements to the school's management systems put in place by the new headteacher have the potential to secure this. Teaching is better now, but is not consistent enough yet. In other respects, progress in tackling the key issues from the 1996 report has been satisfactory. Provision for music and design and technology has improved; good opportunities have been put in place to develop pupils' responsibility; the school's strategic planning has been considerably strengthened; the provision for computers has improved significantly, although it is still below average. However, progress in improving pupils' spiritual development has been unsatisfactory, and needs further attention.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Results in National Curriculum tests taken by pupils aged 14 in 2000 were close to average compared with all schools, but were well below average compared with similar schools (that is, schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Performance in English and mathematics was below average, and in science was average. These results were a considerable improvement from the previous year, when they were affected considerably by high levels of discontinuity in staffing. Since 1998 overall test results have not improved at the same rate as the national picture, due mainly to the very low performance in 1999. The most recent results in 2001 show improvement in mathematics and science, together with a sharp dip in English. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 are below average overall, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory given their below average starting points. Standards are above average in drama, and average in science, history, modern foreign languages, music, art and physical education. They are below average in all other subjects, except in English and information technology where standards are well below average at this stage.

In 2000, the pupils' average points score for GCSE was close to the national average, although below average compared with similar schools, and the school did not meet its targets. The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ passes at the higher grades A*-C, and 5+ passes across the full range of grades A*-G, were below the national averages. Given these pupils' earlier attainment levels at age 14, their results for A*-C grades were average, whilst for A*-G grades they were below average. Girls did better than boys, in line with the national variation. GCSE results have matched the national improvement rate since 1998. Most recent results in 2001 have dipped significantly. This fall in GCSE performance is not unexpected since this is the year group whose performance at age 14 in 1999 was badly affected by staffing issues at that time.

Results in subjects vary considerably. In 2000, they were above average in design and technology, drama, history, statistics and communication studies. Results were close to average in art and science, and were below or well below average in all other subjects. Given their previous levels of attainment, higher attaining pupils achieve well at GCSE, although the achievement of lower attainers, mainly boys, is less consistent. Most recently, the 2001 GCSE results have declined in almost all subjects. Only in English literature and French were results similar to 2000, and there was a slight improvement in physical education. Standards of work seen in Years 10-11 during the inspection mainly reflect the examination results, and are below average overall. The variation between subjects is clear: standards in drama are above average, whilst they are average in science, design and technology, art, music and physical education. Standards are below average elsewhere, except in information technology where they are well below average at this stage. In general, these standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' previous attainment at age 14.

Since the previous inspection, A-level results have been below average. In 2000, the average points score per student was well below average, when results were lower than usual for female students. In 2000, three-quarters of students successfully passed their examinations, with around one-fifth gaining the higher grades A-B. There are low entry numbers in some subjects; as a result, statistical comparisons can be unreliable. However, in 2000 all candidates were successful in geography, mathematics, physics and theatre studies, and the proportion gaining a higher A-B grade was above average in geography. The weaker examination areas were in psychology, French and German. The most recent results in 2001 are significantly better, with 90 per cent of students successfully completing their courses, including over a quarter at the higher grades A-B. Mathematics and geography results have been sustained, and there has been positive improvement in psychology and English literature. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall, and stronger than previous examination results would suggest. Standards are average in all subjects, except design and technology, physical education and history where they are below average. These average levels of attainment in the sixth form represent satisfactory achievement by the students, many of whom have relatively modest GCSE performance when they enter the sixth form. Despite limitations in the study facilities available in the school, a good proportion of students successfully complete their courses and continue to the higher education courses of their choice.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory – most pupils like school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. A minority have unsatisfactory attitudes and can be disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are satisfactory. Pupils generally get on well with each other, and with their teachers.
Attendance	Attendance is below the national average, as a result of weaknesses in Years 10-11. A significant minority of pupils arrive late to school, and to lessons during the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils' learning is satisfactory in response to teaching which is at least good in half of the lessons seen. Teaching was at least satisfactory in just over nine out of ten lessons. However, the incidence of less effective teaching was higher than is usually seen, with one lesson in eleven judged unsatisfactory, spread across seven subjects, and shared equally between Years 7-9 and Years 10-11. Common features of almost all the unsatisfactory lessons were ineffective strategies to ensure pupils' attention and good behaviour, sometimes linked to low expectations and insufficient challenge in the work taking place. There is a lack of consistency in the teaching quality across the school. Teaching is good across the school in geography, art, drama and music. Good teaching predominates in Years 7-9 in physical education, modern foreign languages and information technology. It is also good in design and technology in Years 10-11. However, the quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in English in Years 7-9, and in information technology in Years 10-11. Pupils' learning needs are effectively met in most subjects, including those for pupils having special educational needs. The main strengths in teaching include teachers' good subject knowledge, their detailed planning, and the generally good management of pupils' behaviour in the classroom. However, the full impact of otherwise good or satisfactory teaching is reduced by the disruption caused to learning by the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils across the school. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy require further development to ensure consistency. Where they are used effectively they are helping to improve pupils' basic skills, but strategies require confirmation across the school and consistent application within subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curriculum provision is good, although there are weaknesses in English in Years 7-9, and in information technology in Years 10-11. Careers education is satisfactory. Extra-curricular activities are good, as are the school's links with partner institutions.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory, and pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. There is not enough support for pupils in some classes.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are just two pupils with English as an additional language, and neither is at an early stage of language acquisition. Their progress is similar to pupils generally.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall satisfactory. Provision for pupils' social education is good, but spiritual development is insufficient, as it was at the previous inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for health and safety, together with child protection are satisfactory. New management arrangements have recently been put in place to strengthen pastoral care. Pupils' academic progress is well monitored together with other aspects of their personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The new headteacher has moved swiftly in setting an agenda for improvement. He is providing very good leadership and vision, with positive support from the core management team. Subject and pastoral management are good, but the monitoring of teaching and learning needs more consistency to help raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are conscientious and committed to the well-being of the school. They have a growing awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and fully endorse the headteacher's vision for school improvement. They are now monitoring finances well, but statutory curriculum requirements for information technology and collective worship are not in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's strategic planning has been strengthened. Regular review of test and examination results has been introduced, and subject performance is monitored. As yet, insufficient use is made of assessment information to set targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and principles of best value are very well managed, and strongly linked to school priorities. Specific grants are properly used. There are now sufficient teachers, but the accommodation has shortcomings, despite improvements. Support staff are well deployed. Provision for computers has improved, but more are needed. There are insufficient books in the library, and in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Most feel that teaching is good, and pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. • Most feel that their children make good progress. • They feel the school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are concerned about behaviour. • The amount of homework set causes concern. • The school does not work closely enough with parents, and does not provide enough information about children's progress. • The school does not do enough to ensure children become mature and responsible, or to provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

A high proportion of parents completed the questionnaire, reflecting their positive interest in their children's education. Inspectors agree with some positive views of parents, but judge teaching and progress to be satisfactory. The significant levels of concern are mainly the result of previously unclear communication systems and practices, which have been notably improved since the appointment of the new headteacher. The reports about children's progress are now very good, and links between school and home are improving. Inspectors judge that the use of homework has improved and is now satisfactory, and that the range of extra-curricular activities available is good. More opportunities are now being provided for pupils to take responsibility, notably through the new year and student councils. Inspectors do, however, share concerns about behaviour. Most behaviour is good, but more needs to be done to improve the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of the minority who disrupt progress and learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this slightly larger than average 11-18 mixed comprehensive school has 132 students. This is slightly smaller than most other sixth forms, although numbers are rising as the school gains in popularity. It provides a very wide range of subjects and vocational courses, including newly introduced joint provision for modern foreign languages, design and technology, and music shared with another local school. Around one third of pupils from Year 11 continue into the sixth form, encouraged by the school's flexible approach to entry requirements, and three-quarters of these students complete two year programmes leading to A-level or Advanced Vocational Certificate qualifications. Examination results at 16+ have been below average, but show good improvement in the most recent 2001 results.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Sixth form provision is satisfactory and cost-effective. Students' learning and their achievement are satisfactory. They are able to choose from a wide range of courses, and vocational opportunities have expanded considerably since the previous inspection. Opportunities for enrichment and personal development are variable, and provision of study facilities is poor. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently satisfactory, and is good in geography, physics, art and business studies. Examples of good teaching feature in all subjects.

Strengths

- Results are improving; in 2001, 90 per cent of students successfully completed their courses, with more than a quarter gaining A-B grades.
- Students achieve very good results in geography, and do well in mathematics, physics and theatre studies.
- Teaching is consistently satisfactory across the school, and is good in geography, physics, art and business studies.
- The school offers a wide range of courses, and accepts students with a wide range of GCSE attainment into the sixth form.
- Students' work and progress are carefully monitored.

What could be improved

- The consistency of standards across subjects, and the incidence of good or better teaching.
- Accommodation, including library facilities and provision for study, to ensure the development of skills of independent research and enquiry, and to help raise standards.
- The quality and range of provision for enrichment, including religious education, and for personal development and guidance, including careers advice.
- Attendance of some students, together with a stronger commitment to their studies.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	Satisfactory. Students attain average standards and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise and know their students' capabilities well. Teaching is systematic but could be more challenging. Provision for learning and research is unsatisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Results are generally average, and are as expected given students' GCSE results. Teaching is satisfactory, and staff have good subject knowledge and good relationships with students, but do not involve them in their learning often enough.
Physics	Good. Results consistently close to or slightly below average. Students achieve well as a result of generally good teaching. Learning is improving as a consequence of better monitoring of students' progress. Use of ICT is insufficient.
Information technology	Satisfactory. Results have been below average, but standards are improving in response to the introduction of a course more appropriate to the previous experience of the students. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there is too much variation in the quality of individual lessons.
Geography	Good. Results, standards and achievement on the A2 course are above average. Fieldwork is a particular strength. Teaching is generally good but learning is only satisfactory in Year 12 because some students are not committed to the demands of the AS course.
History	Satisfactory. Most recent examination results in 2001 have improved from 2000 when they were well below average. Teaching is satisfactory, but standards are not high enough in Year 12.
Business studies	Good. In response to good teaching, students are achieving well. ICT is used well, but there is need to improve the quality and range of students' written work.
Art and design	Good. Results are in line with the national average. Students learn effectively because teaching is good. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory – those students with modest GCSE results achieve well.
Physical education	Unsatisfactory. Standards in the recently introduced examination course are below average. Initial AS level results in 2001 are low, but represent satisfactory achievement given students' modest GCSE results. Teaching is satisfactory, but progress is affected by weaknesses in the timetable for physical education.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was at least satisfactory in these subjects, but in two lessons teaching was good, one in psychology and one in design and technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Guidance and support requires improvement. Student induction into the sixth form is satisfactory, and most receive good information about courses. Careers guidance is not effective for all. Student progress is monitored well by subject teachers. The role of the sixth form tutors requires strengthening in checking overall progress and attendance.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are satisfactory, and will be strengthened by the new management arrangements and sixth form development plan. The performance of students as indicated by analysis of their GCSE results is not yet used rigorously enough to check progress in subjects; further monitoring and evaluation are required.

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"> • Choice of courses is wide and they receive clear information about them. • They are taught well and expected to work hard in almost all courses. • Teachers are helpful, support them well in their study, and assess work thoroughly. • Their views are mostly listened to, and they are treated as responsible young adults. • They enjoy being in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice about course selection, and guidance about what to do when students leave school. • Information about progress in relation to the qualifications they are working towards. • The range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses. • Provision for independent study.

Students are positive about the sixth form and the strengths they identify are well-founded, particularly regarding the wide range of courses available. Their concerns are justified regarding the limitations of the advice and guidance they receive, and the limited range of enrichment opportunities. Subject teachers provide secure information about progress in their areas, but the tutors' involvement in this could be improved. Provision for study is poor, and many students choose to go home to make effective use of private study time.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils join the school at the end of Year 6 their overall standards of attainment are below average, and below those expected for a typical comprehensive school. Most recently attainment on entry shows signs of improvement, but results in the national tests taken by pupils at age 11 in 2000 show that their attainment is below average in each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. A wide range of ability is included, but there are few pupils who are well above average when they join the school. This is confirmed by the results of the standardised tests administered by the school in Year 7, which show that the school population is below average, and this has been the case since the previous inspection in 1996.

2. In 2000 the overall results in National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 14 were close to average when compared with all schools, with girls attaining more highly than boys, in line with the national picture. Pupils' performance was below average in English and mathematics, whilst in science it was average. These results were a considerable improvement from the previous year (1999), when the performance of girls, and particularly boys in all three subjects dipped sharply in response to considerable discontinuity in staffing and teaching across the school. Since the previous inspection in 1996 the rate of improvement in these Key Stage 3 test results has been below the national trend, mainly because of this significant drop in 1999, notably in English, and to a lesser extent in mathematics and science. When compared with the results of similar schools, (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), results in all three core subjects were well below average. The most recent 2001 results indicate some improvement in mathematics and science, although they have dipped sharply in English.

3. Results in GCSE examinations have been below the national average over the past three years, but have been matching the national rate of improvement over that period. In 2000, the school's average GCSE points score per pupil was close to the national average. Girls scored more highly but both boys' and girls' results were close to the respective national averages. In 2000, both the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher A*-C grades, and those achieving five or more passes across the full range of grades A*-G were below the national averages. In line with the national picture, girls performed better than boys especially at the higher grades. Given pupils' prior attainment in the National Curriculum tests at age 14, the GCSE results achieved by the school were average for five or more A*-C grades, above average for average points scored, and below average for five or more A*-G grades. This indicates positive performance from the higher attaining pupils in the examinations, whilst the performance of the lower attaining pupils, mainly boys, falls below expectation. In the most recent GCSE examinations in 2001, there has been a significant drop in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades, and in the overall average points score. This is not surprising, given that this is the same group of pupils who attained the low results in 1999, when their progress was badly affected by problems of continuity in teaching and learning. Overall, the school has not been successful in meeting its targets for GCSE in either 2000 or 2001. This is due to weaknesses in the use of data on prior attainment to set achievable and realistic targets – an area that has only been recently given priority in the school's analysis of its performance.

4. GCSE results in subjects for 2000 varied considerably for grades A*-C. They were above average in design and technology, drama, history, statistics, and communication studies. Results were close to average in art and science, and were below average in all other subjects. The proportion of pupils entered for the examinations is at or above the national figure in almost all subjects except mathematics and history, and almost all pupils take a modern foreign language. This positive entry policy is a good feature which ensures access to examination success for the majority of pupils, including some with special educational needs. Comparison of their 2000 results show that pupils did better in design and technology, drama, history and statistics than in their other examination subjects. Their least successful subjects were English literature, business studies and physical education. In the most recent GCSE examinations in 2001 results declined in almost all subjects. English literature and

French sustained results at similar levels to the previous year, whilst there was a slight improvement in physical education.

5. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards reflect the examination results, and are below average. Standards in Years 7-9 are above average in drama, and are average in science, history, modern foreign languages, music, art and physical education. Other subjects are below average, with the exception of English and information technology where pupils are attaining well below average standards. In Years 10-11 the standards of work seen are also below average overall. Work in drama continues to be above average, and generally average standards are found in science, design and technology, art, music and physical education. Standards are below average in other subjects, but work in information technology remains well below average at this stage.

6. The progress and achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are satisfactory as they move through the school, as a result of satisfactory teaching. Given their mainly below average starting points, pupils' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is acceptable in the majority of subjects. Their achievement is good in drama, music and art in response to good teaching and high expectations. Pupils also achieve well in geography and design and technology, making rapid progress despite their limited previous experience and skills in these subjects. In English, however, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory at this stage because of weaknesses in teaching. In Years 10-11, pupils' overall achievement continues to be satisfactory. The good achievement in drama, art and music is sustained, whilst in English pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, although the overall picture is satisfactory, there is some inconsistency in achievement – the higher attaining pupils respond well to the sound teaching quality and achieve well because of their commitment and hard work. Some lower attaining pupils, mainly but not exclusively boys, do not do as well as they should at this stage because of their unsatisfactory attitudes and attendance. Many of these pupils do not complete GCSE coursework requirements, and do not obtain the results in examinations of which they are potentially capable.

7. The school has recently begun to establish targets for improvement in GCSE standards. These are based on predictions for each pupil using data which links their prior attainment and Year 9 results with GCSE outcomes. This work requires further development, particularly in subjects so that they are able to check on standards, track pupil progress and develop strategies which will promote improvement. The impact of this work in the sixth form can already be seen in the improved A-level results in 2001.

8. With the exception of history, pupils with special educational needs make progress that is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and they achieve what is expected of them. In art, business studies, geography and modern foreign languages they make good progress. In some lessons, specialist teachers and learning support assistants work with small groups of pupils to focus on pupils' identified learning needs in literacy and numeracy. In these lessons, all pupils on the register, including those with statements of special educational need, make good progress.

9. The very small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in developing their English language, and in subjects across the curriculum. Measures are being introduced to improve the provision for gifted and talented pupils but it is too early yet to evaluate the pupils' progress.

Standards in key skills

10. Generally, pupils' literacy skills are below average. This limits the rate of progress of some pupils in those curriculum subjects that rely on the skills of reading and writing. The school has made some initial progress in improving literacy levels, for example, in identifying strategies such as the teaching of specialist key words in subjects. A coordinator has been appointed to stimulate the school's thinking about literacy development. A more consistent application of strategies for improvement is needed to raise standards. The effectiveness of initiatives such as word walls, structured writing aids, and the use of technical vocabulary is impeded by their haphazard use across the school.

11. The school is in the early stages of developing a systematic and coordinated whole school approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum. Pupils successfully employ a range of

numeracy skills in many subjects and there are several examples of their skills enhancing learning. Pupils' data handling skills are well used in geography when they construct various statistical graphs to illuminate information, particularly for their fieldwork. In science pupils' measuring and estimation skills are in evidence when using measuring cylinders, and they use their graphical skills in recording the results of experiments. In music pupils are confident in calculating arithmetical subdivisions of a beat, including the addition of fractions. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory, and make a positive contribution to their learning in some subjects across the curriculum, but a more consistent and coordinated strategy is needed to help raise standards across the school.

12. As at the time of the previous inspection there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects. Standards overall are well below average. In modern foreign languages pupils have access to a good range of software that they are beginning to use to good effect. In history pupils use the Internet for research, for example, in helping their understanding of life in an Oldham Workhouse. Pupils with special educational needs use writing and spelling programmes to improve their literacy skills and some work is presented with the aid of word processing software. There is good use of ICT to support learning in geography and art. In geography, pupils use the Internet for research, for example, when gathering information on the effects of earthquakes in California. They use word processing skills in presenting work and have used spreadsheets to present data. In art pupils regularly use CD Roms and the Internet, for example, when researching African art, and have used scanners and digital cameras for presenting their work. In English there is inadequate use of the Internet for research and word processing skills are rarely used. There is insufficient use of ICT in mathematics or science. In music, much better resources are needed to teach the National Curriculum for pupils in Years 7-9. In design and technology there is little control or computer-aided design work.

Sixth form

13. Since the previous inspection, overall results in A-level examinations have been below average. In 2000, the average points score per student was well below average, and results were lower than usual, notably for the female students. Just over three-quarters of students successfully completed their courses, with around one-fifth gaining the higher grades. Statistical comparisons can be unreliable given the small size of the sixth form, and the low entry numbers in some subjects. However, in 2000 results in geography, mathematics, physics and theatre studies were good, with all candidates gaining a pass grade, and a higher than average proportion achieving the higher grades A-B in geography. The weakest examination results were in psychology, French and German. The most recent A-level results for 2001 show good improvement, with a significant increase in average points score per student. This is reflected in the overall pass rate with almost 90 per cent of students successfully completing their courses, together with more than a quarter gaining the higher grades A-B, a significant improvement. In almost all subjects, all students gained a pass grade, with the exception of the sciences, history and computing. Mathematics and geography have sustained their results. The proportion of higher grades has improved notably in English literature, whilst there has been positive improvement in psychology.

14. In work seen during the inspection, the standards in subjects in Years 12 and 13 are stronger than the examination results, and are average overall. The inspection of lessons and review of students' work confirm that standards are below average in design technology, history and physical education. In all other subjects, students' attainment, and their standards in key skills are average.

15. Students' progress and achievement in the sixth form is consistently satisfactory. The entry profile of students entering the sixth form is lower than is usually found – in the current Year 12 two-thirds of the students have fewer than five GCSE passes at A*-C grade. Given the relatively modest prior attainment of some of the students, most make satisfactory progress throughout their courses, and are successfully able to access higher education courses of their choice. They respond well to the secure quality of teaching, and many show strong commitment to their work, particularly in the light of the unsatisfactory study provision available in the school. Progress and achievement are good in geography, art and theatre studies, and are satisfactory in all other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Overall, pupils have satisfactory attitudes towards school and their work. They generally work well, show interest in lessons and organise their work efficiently. However, in a minority of classes, the teachers have to work hard to promote good learning attitudes, as some pupils are inattentive and a few can be confrontational.

17. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory overall, and often good, with pupils working co-operatively, showing respect for each other and their teachers. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes were not satisfactory in about one lesson in thirteen seen in the week of inspection. Often this was either because the work was not appropriately challenging or because of the disruptive influence of a few difficult pupils. Last year the school used over 100 exclusions for short periods from the school. This is a high number but justified as part of the school's recent drive to improve standards. There is evidence that the numbers of fixed period exclusions are now falling and behaviour standards improving. Since the previous inspection, the incidence of permanent exclusion has been similar to the majority of schools across the country.

18. Around the school, most pupils are friendly and orderly. The vast majority act responsibly. Year 8 pupils acting as receptionists in the entrance foyer are helpful towards visitors. Pupils are tolerant of the long waits to lunch in the canteen. Where there is visible staff presence, behaviour is good. The site is, however, extensive and difficult to supervise. At lesson changeovers or outside in unsupervised areas there can be too much pushing or jostling.

19. The inspection team received several letters from parents about long standing incidences of bullying at the school. The school has recently introduced new and appropriate measures to combat bullying, which promise to be effective. Pupils say that they feel confident in the systems, have a means to ask for help in confidence, and feel supported by their teachers and the new anti bullying group. Nevertheless, this is an area for concern and continuing vigilance.

20. Attendance has been similar to the national average for recent years, but last year fell below the benchmark of 90 per cent. The unsatisfactory attendance was concentrated in Years 10-11 where there are a small number of pupils who are disinterested in schooling. A small but significant number of pupils arrive late to school and to lessons during the day.

21. Relationships in the school are satisfactory. Many pupils speak highly of the way specific teachers help them and pupils generally work co-operatively with each other. Pupils accept the views and different religious beliefs of other people. There is no evidence of racial tension.

22. Pupils show that they can respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility or take initiative. A group of pupils in Year 10 were trained to help and advise Year 7 at tutorial periods. The student council plays an active and important role in school decision-making, has revived the variety show and raised money for improvements to the stage and drama facilities.

23. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning and to school life. They respond well to the support they receive and make good progress in building up the self-confidence to make friends and take part in social activities. They are polite and friendly, and work cooperatively with their learning support assistants. However, pupils with behavioural difficulties often have negative attitudes towards school and do not benefit as well as they should from the help available to them.

Sixth form

24. In virtually all lessons students in the sixth form show sound or better attitudes, good behaviour and a willingness to work. Students are pleased with recent improvements to the sixth form and the vast majority enjoy attending, are interested in their courses and feel they have made the right choices. Most are conscientious to complete the coursework and research topics. There are limited enrichment activities in the sixth form, and study facilities are poor. As a consequence, personal and learning skills

are generally underdeveloped. Most students are satisfied with the sixth form and show a sense of ownership and personal responsibility. Relationships are harmonious.

25. Attendance is cause for concern, and a minority of students lack commitment in class. During the week of inspection 56 lessons were seen in the sixth form and the average attendance at lessons was a disappointing 82 per cent. Students are allowed to leave site in between their programmed lessons. Not all students choose to come to school for the morning registration and thus miss out on contact time with their tutor. These arrangements require some reconsideration.

26. Students are co-operative, willing to help each other and members of staff. They are willing to take responsibility and organise their own activities as, for example, the variety show. The student council is effective. Many students take part in the community sports leaders award course.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. Across the school, the overall quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes is satisfactory. In Years 7-9 and Years 10-11, the teaching seen is at least good in 50 per cent of lessons – a lower proportion than is usually found. One lesson in seven is very good or better, mainly in music in Years 7-9 in music and mathematics in Years 10-11. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced, but during the inspection one lesson in eleven was judged to be unsatisfactory, shared evenly between Years 7-9 and Years 10-11, and featuring in seven curriculum areas. Despite the improved teaching, it is not yet realising sufficient progress in raising pupils' standards of attainment, and there is need to secure more consistent standards of teaching across the school. This has been recognised by the new headteacher, who has established teaching as a key strand for improvement in the school development plan.

28. Teaching is good across the school in geography, art, drama and music (in Years 7-9 music teaching is very good). Good teaching predominates in Years 7-9 in physical education, modern foreign languages and information technology. It is also good in design and technology in Years 10-11. Elsewhere, teaching is almost always satisfactory, and examples of good teaching can be found in all subjects. However, the quality of both the teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in English in Years 7-9 and in information technology in Years 10-11. In English, the work presented lacked appropriate breadth and challenge, whilst in information technology, weak classroom management resulted in insufficient learning and progress. During the inspection unsatisfactory teaching was seen, spread across the year groups, in single lessons in mathematics, music, history and religious education, and in two lessons each in English, personal, social and health education (PSHE), design and technology, and information technology. In the majority of these lessons, the common weakness was the ineffective strategies employed by the teachers to ensure pupils' full attention and good behaviour. This was sometimes linked to a lack of appropriate challenge in the work presented, and to teachers' expectations of pupils which were too low.

29. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are good. The positive presentation of their subjects impacts strongly on pupils' rates of progress and attainment, particularly where expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high. This is notably the case in drama, art, music and geography, where pupils are consistently challenged by the work presented.

30. Teachers are now setting clear objectives for their lessons, and generally explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, for example in mathematics, English, music and drama, pupils' progress and understanding are regularly reviewed, and drawn together in effective lesson summaries. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies that are appropriate for the work taking place, and for the pupils involved. Collaborative work features strongly in music, drama, physical education, and in some lessons in design and technology and information technology. The teaching in information technology in Years 7-9 is good, but there is insufficient use in other subjects.

31. Elsewhere, more attention should be given to the development of pupils' key skills of literacy and numeracy. In literacy, a number of key strategies have been agreed, for example, the use of key words

in subjects, but the implementation is uneven across the school. This is also the case with the development of reading and writing. Similarly in numeracy, the development of a whole-school approach is not yet in place. Pupils are successfully employing numeracy skills in a number of subjects, including geography and science, with positive impact on their progress. Across the school, however, there is a lack of coherence in the promotion of numeracy skills, and there is need for a more consistent application of agreed whole-school approaches to support attainment and progress across the curriculum.

32. Teachers plan their work well, and tasks are generally well matched to the needs and capabilities of the majority of pupils. In some subjects, for example, geography, science, English and physical education, there is need to ensure the needs of the higher attaining pupils are fully met, for example, through the wider use of extension tasks and material.

33. Despite this good planning by teachers, the full impact of otherwise satisfactory or good teaching is adversely affected by the unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes to learning of a significant minority of pupils, mainly but not exclusively, boys. The progress of the majority was disrupted in some lessons, for example, in mathematics, English, history, design and technology, and physical education. On occasion, teachers' expectations of behaviour were not high enough, but more frequently, lessons were not as productive as the teaching deserved. In general, the management of pupils in the classroom is good, and supported by positive relationships with pupils. Teachers set good examples, relating well to their classes and providing positive support and encouragement. Discipline is satisfactory, but teachers have to work hard to maintain full control in a minority of lessons, and to check the behaviour and concentration of some pupils.

34. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments for improvement, but pupils are not always provided with a clear understanding of their learning and relative attainment because subjects make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in their marking. This is a particular concern in mathematics, English and history, yet is a significant strength in science and modern foreign languages. The use of homework has improved since the previous inspection, and current arrangements are satisfactory. Again, variations in the effectiveness were noted, with positive impact on progress and learning in geography, and room for improvement in English, history and religious education.

35. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in their small withdrawal groups where they benefit from the individual help given by experienced specialist teachers and support staff. The quality of teaching is also good in those whole class lessons, for example in English and geography and modern foreign languages, where teachers and learning support assistants have a clear knowledge of their pupils' needs and work very effectively together. These lessons are lively and stimulating, with teaching styles and tasks well matched to learning needs. The teaching is less effective when teachers do not make use of pupils' individual learning plans in their lesson planning, and when there is no classroom support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Sixth form

36. The quality of teaching in the sixth form, and the learning that it promotes, is satisfactory. Almost half of the teaching in the sixth form is good, although only one lesson in fifteen was judged to be very good. A smaller proportion, one lesson in thirty, was unsatisfactory, with the remaining teaching judged to be satisfactory.

37. A wide range of sixth form subjects were sampled during the inspection, and in none was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory overall. Nine subjects were inspected in greater depth. In those 'focus' subjects, teaching and learning were good in geography, physics, art and business studies; they were satisfactory in English, mathematics, information technology, history and physical education. Examples of good teaching featured in each subject. The small proportion of less than satisfactory teaching was in two lessons; one in history where work was not well matched to the wide range of student capability, and there was an over-reliance on the textbook; the second in chemistry where progress in the

practical work was insufficient because the teacher's time was shared between two separate Year 12 and an individual Year 13 student, tackling different work.

38. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are strong. In more effective lessons, expectations of student response are high, so that they are required to tackle challenging tasks and activities with positive impact on their progress and attainment. This was the case, for example, in a successful Year 13 art lesson focused on increasing student awareness of the artistic heritages of other cultures. A similarly successful approach was seen in a Year 13 geography lesson where the factors affecting the economic development of natural resources were explored. Lesson planning is also good in the sixth form.

39. Teachers usually explain to students what they have to learn and why, and the requirements and expectations for examination success are clearly rehearsed. In most subjects, effective use is made of specimen examination questions to review progress and check understanding. This was particularly effectively used in a Year 13 biology lesson covering the renal system where past examination questions were used both to challenge students' understanding as well as providing valuable practice in examination technique. Elsewhere, teaching styles and working methods are appropriate to developing learning skills for sixth form students. Collaborative work features regularly in art, physical education, science, theatre studies, and in some lessons in geography, and design and technology. The recent improvement in computer provision ensures that the use and application of information technology is good in business studies, information technology and art. In other areas, there is some over-dependence on teachers which is compounded by the poor study facilities available to sixth form students in the school. This results in restricted opportunities for students to develop the important skills of independent research and enquiry. However, the three components of key skills, communication, application of number, and information technology are taught well through many of the subject specific courses.

40. Most lessons proceed at a purposeful pace, often with effective questioning which encourages students' communication skills, tests knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. This approach was notably successful in a Year 13 information technology lesson which focused on data processing and structures. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, and information relating to students' prior attainment at GCSE is used to gauge progress towards predicted targets for success in the A-level examinations. Homework is used effectively in most subjects, and is supported by regular marking which often provides clear guidance for improvement, notably in geography.

41. Relationships are good in the sixth form. Many teachers are good listeners who relate well to students, and provide a good level of individual support and encouragement. There is, however, room for a greater expectation of intellectual and creative effort from some of the lower attaining students, whose work ethic is not strongly developed. The provision of improved study facilities and a more structured approach to the use of available time are key elements in improving students' learning and personal development.

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

42. The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum is good and has improved since the previous inspection especially in design and technology, music and in the sixth form. It provides equally for boys and girls and students of all abilities. In Years 7 to 11 the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama and PSHE.

43. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory in most subjects. They are unsatisfactory in English in Years 7-9 and in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10-11. In English the course is not balanced and in ICT the syllabus does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Although the provision of ICT has increased significantly in recent years the use of computers to support students' learning in most subjects is not in place.

44. In Year 7 all pupils take French and German. In Years 8 and 9 the more able pupils continue to take both languages but most take one language. In Years 10-11 pupils take up to 10 full and two short GCSE subjects. All take English literature and the dual award science. In addition to English, mathematics, ICT, PSHE, physical education and world religions they have a choice of five options. To ensure a balanced education for most pupils these choices must include a modern language, and a subject from technology, the arts and the humanities. The options include two GNVQ vocational courses. Disapplication from the National Curriculum is used appropriately to provide vocational courses, enabling some pupils to specialise and others to take the Youth Award. The current timetabling arrangements in Year 10 for mathematics are unsatisfactory. Four lessons in one week and one in the next make learning inefficient. This, together with the lower time than that usually given to mathematics in Years 10-11, has an adverse effect on pupils' progress. The school is implementing the new strategies for improving literacy and numeracy skills, but more consistent application is still needed to help to raise standards.

45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and they have full access to the National Curriculum. The school operates an inclusive policy for pupils with special educational needs and the curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the special needs register. Pupils also have access to special programmes with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy and also benefit from being able to take vocational courses in addition to academic subjects. Pupils are integrated into lessons but there is not enough support in classes which have large numbers of pupils with special needs, and this has resulted in some unsatisfactory learning. Individual education plans are in place for all who need them. There are clear targets for improvement in basic skills, organisation and behaviour, but subject teachers do not make enough use of this information in their lesson planning.

46. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities for personal development. They develop self-confidence through taking part in activities aimed at improving their social skills, such as group discussions, paired working and school clubs. They also benefit from the friendly, informal atmosphere of the lunchtime reading club run by the special needs staff. Pupils identified as gifted and talented made similar gains when they took part in a summer school organised by the school which included Year 6 pupils from local primary schools.

47. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good overall. These activities extend the learning experiences of the pupils who participate. The provision of extra-curricular sport is satisfactory. There are school teams in seven sports and these, together with inter-form competitions, ensure about half of the pupils take part. Subjects provide extra support for coursework and there are summer schools for literacy, numeracy and the gifted and talented. There is a tradition of variety performances, a number of musical activities and trips to the theatre and art galleries. Visiting actors, writers and artists enrich this provision. Trips are arranged locally, nationally and abroad for educational and recreational purposes, for example, the business studies link with Barcelona and the new language exchange with a school in South Germany.

48. The school provides a satisfactory programme of PSHE. All pupils follow a taught course of PSHE which appropriately includes sex and drugs education, and is of satisfactory quality. A good feature is that the course is now taught by senior and experienced teachers, which gives it a suitably high profile. However, some of the material currently used is not challenging enough for the ages and ability of the pupils, and there is some imbalance between the elements of the course. At present there is an over emphasis on health education at the expense of personal and study skills development. Strategies to counter bullying have not been covered in enough depth early on in school life.

49. The careers education and guidance programme is satisfactory. The careers service supplements the work of the school and offers a careers advice interview to all Year 11 pupils. Most pupils accept the offer of a mock interview with representatives from local business and industry. Access to the careers library is too restricted as it is used as a classroom. A biennial careers convention is well supported and attended. Most Year 10 pupils undertake a week of work experience that is prepared and monitored within the time constraints.

50. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning in the careers programme. In addition a number of visitors including the police, theatre groups, artists, writers and teachers from Japan contribute in many areas. There is an annual health 'road show' for Year 11 pupils. Pupils use the local area and the community to gather data, for example in geography, to support their learning. The local community uses the school in the evenings and at weekends.

51. Relationships with partner institutions are good and the programme of transition is very good. Both Year 5 and 6 pupils visit the school for lessons. There is an open evening for families in the autumn term and in the late summer term induction days are held for Year 6 pupils. These days are followed by parents' evenings. A very good innovation is the training of Year 10 pupils who support the new intake each year. The headteacher regularly takes assemblies in the feeder primary schools and the transfer of records is good. There are curricular links in art, drama and music and some of the sixth form students coach and referee in the primary schools as part of the Community Sports Leader Award. There are links with three higher education institutions and the school provides a number of places for students on Initial Teacher Training.

52. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory; the situation has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection. Although a policy has been devised and has been ratified by the governing body, and some discussion has taken place between members of the senior management team and heads of faculty, the policy has not been implemented within departments. There has been no monitoring of the situation either by the school's core management team or by the governing body. Assemblies are held twice weekly for each year group but neither in these nor during tutor time is there time for reflection, although in isolated instances, this did occur. Sixth form students have assemblies twice each half-term; the procedures for registering their attendance do not constitute any formal tutor time; as a result there is no designated time for reflection for sixth form students. Within some subjects opportunities occur from time to time. In drama Year 7 pupils became fascinated by their study of the circus, and, in music, pupils are encouraged to appreciate the quality of each others' performances. Opportunities in other subjects, including religious education, are missed because teachers do not plan to ensure that pupils become aware of this aspect.

53. Moral education is satisfactory. Expectations about standards of behaviour are clear, and pupils are fully aware of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils in Year 10 are trained as mentors for new pupils in Year 7, and in Year 9 pupils mediate on one another's behalf. Moral issues are discussed in English, with consideration of censorship and of the influence of the media; in art, pupils painted a bathroom in a home for the elderly and also worked with pupils in a special school to improve the environment. Good opportunities occur in geography, where pupils learn the effects of global warming and consider the difficulties for local economies caused by the El Nino phenomenon. Sixth form students discuss problems caused by population movement and the effects on society of an ageing population. The student council is involved with moral issues and has set up an anti-bullying group which meets regularly. At its suggestion, complaints about bullying can be made anonymously. Nevertheless, incidents of both physical and verbal bullying too often occur; in most instances these involve younger pupils.

54. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils participate in team games and music groups, and exchange arrangements have been set up with a school in Germany. In English, music, drama and physical education lessons pupils learn to cooperate in small groups. Pupils act as receptionists and help at open evenings and other events attended by the public. Members of the sixth form act as sport coaches for younger pupils, help organise sports day and are currently planning to produce a variety show for the second year in succession. A small number of sixth form students are involved in a Young Enterprise scheme. Pupils raise money for charitable causes; during the week of the inspection, each lunchtime, Year 8 pupils were taking turns in organising a competition to raise funds for a local charity.

55. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils take part in theatre trips and give performances in drama, and in music and art pupils learn about the impact of a wide range of historical and social influences. Resources for the study of other cultures is good in art; in music, pupils in Year 9 learn to improvise on Indian raga, two steel bands play in the Carribean tradition, and the department

recently played host to a gospel choir. Pupils in modern foreign languages benefit from having a teacher whose native language is German and another whose husband is French; in religious education pupils discover how other religions are practised. The library is well equipped to support most subjects in their study of the traditions of other cultures. Each year the school hosts a teacher from Japan.

The sixth form curriculum

56. The school offers a very wide range of academic and vocational courses which meet the needs of almost all its Year 11 students who wish to continue their education at Wilsthorpe. There has been a considerable expansion of vocational course provision since the previous inspection. Approximately one third of Year 11 students choose to stay on at the school beyond age 16 and almost all follow a combination of their choice. However, although many students end up on courses well suited to their individual needs, the overall quality and range of opportunities for learning provided for students is unsatisfactory. In addition to the subject specific courses, students are required to attend lessons on key skills, careers guidance and PSHE. A significant number of students do not treat these courses seriously and attendance at these lessons is unsatisfactory. In addition, a general studies course is offered at AS and A level but the take-up is small and attendance unsatisfactory. A successful Community Sports Leader award provides good enrichment and social development. There is little formal provision for students' spiritual and cultural development and provision for religious education, a statutory requirement, identified as lacking in the previous inspection has not been rectified. Careers education has weaknesses, extra-curricular provision is sparse and, as found in the previous report, there is no formal provision for recreational sport.

57. A consequence of the large number of courses being taught is that many have only a small number of students. Currently in Year 12 there are 12 AS or AVCE courses with five or fewer students and the average group size in Years 12 and 13 is less than 10. This is uneconomic and the school has tried to mitigate this situation by teaching some Year 12 and 13 groups together. This is successful in some subjects but in others, where learning has to be progressively built on previous attainment, the progress of students is restricted, as was observed in a chemistry lesson. Another approach has been to teach some 'minority' courses in conjunction with another local school. Currently French, German, music and design and technology are taught this way. This is a positive new initiative and the school is evaluating its success with a view to expanding the number of courses involved. A further disadvantage of small group numbers is that students do not benefit from the stimulus of belonging to a peer group large enough for meaningful debate and the effective sharing of ideas.

58. Departments have developed new schemes of work that reflect well the new specifications for subject content. These allow students to build on their GCSE work and quickly start to make progress. The amount of non-teaching time is quite significant for many pupils; in many cases as much as 40 per cent. The school policy is to allow pupils to work at home if there are no taught periods in a morning or afternoon session. Although work is set by subject teachers to be done in non-teaching time there is no formal planning for the development of individual study skills. The alternative to working at home is unattractive for many students, as provision in school for individual study is poor.

59. In Year 11, potential students have two days induction into the sixth form in July, which they find useful. Most found that they settled quickly into the sixth form, and that their timetable and course options ran smoothly. Some students felt they needed further induction, prior to their start in September. There is scope for improvement in the advice given on course choices. For example, a few students are taking courses in art, history and computing which are too narrow or for which they have inappropriate prior qualifications. Support for students with special needs in the sixth form is satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. The school provides satisfactory care for its pupils. Child protection procedures are in place which comply with legislation and staff have been given suitable training. The school has improved the health and safety concerns identified in the previous report, and has effective procedures for risk assessment.

61. The management structure of the school has recently changed to improve support and guidance for pupils. The year group managers, key stage managers and tutors have a sound oversight of their pupils. There are now satisfactory records of pupils' personal development, which are collated centrally. Pupils meet with their form tutors for a twenty-minute registration and tutorial period on the mornings without whole school assembly. In the Year 7 tutor periods, this time was used well to develop relationships and settle the new pupils smoothly into school routines. In some other years the time was not always used to best effect to make a productive start to the day. Pupils receive sound personal guidance from their tutors and from the taught programme of personal social and health education, but more needs to be done to ensure consistent monitoring of their academic progress.

62. The systems to encourage and promote good behaviour are satisfactory. Many staff have been trained in behaviour management strategies by the Derbyshire behaviour support unit and there is a whole school initiative to focus on improving learning, for example, by sharing with the class the objectives of each lesson. These are successful initiatives. There is still some inconsistency of approach between teachers in managing the behaviour of their classes and, for example, in the use of the reward system across the school.

63. There is some evidence of bullying at the school. There have been deficiencies in the school's approach to deter oppressive behaviour which are currently being tackled. Pupils have been given questionnaires to identify any potential problems and parents have been consulted about the school's anti-bullying policy. Pupils feel confident in the new procedures. The help given by Year 10 pupils as mentors for Year 7, and the work of the anti-bullying group, is proving successful. The new anti-bullying procedures are appropriate, but have not yet been in place long enough to be fully effective.

64. There are satisfactory procedures to monitor and promote good levels of attendance. The newly appointed year managers monitor attendance effectively and the educational social worker gives good support. The school office has started to contact some parents on the first day their children are absent from school; this is good practice. Attendance registers are taken in lessons, although attendance in lessons is not consistently compared to school attendance, so that internal truancy does occur. Attendance data is not yet analysed by gender, ability and ethnicity so as to identify trends and concentrate effort towards specific groups.

65. The procedures to assess pupils' attainment and progress have improved and are now good. There is now comprehensive baseline data for pupils, records of national tests and a twice termly assessed piece of work to identify the National Curriculum levels that pupils are working at. There is sound, and improving use of this data. Some staff are setting targets for themselves and predicting their pupils potential from the standardised tests on entry, the end of key stage scores and teacher assessments. In science and physical education there is some very effective practice, which is helping to raise attainment. However, assessment information is not being used consistently to identify areas for improvement, and to set targets and check on progress.

66. Pupils receive satisfactory guidance about their progress and feel well informed of their standards of work from marking, and from the interim and end of year reports on their progress. The new pastoral structure promises to provide a focus for an overview of pupils' academic progress across the different subjects. Work has started to identify and support pupils who are underachieving in Year 11.

67. The school has clear systems for identifying pupils in need of extra help and a strength of the provision is the quality of the learning support. Arrangements for supporting the above average numbers of pupils with statements of special educational need are well established and very effective. Pupils are well aware of the targets set for them in their individual education plans and usually take an active part in the formal reviews of progress, but not all teachers make effective use of them when planning their work. Support for pupils at the early stages of the Code of Practice has been recognised by the school as an area for improvement and is currently being reorganised to ensure that all identified pupils receive the help they need. The efficient liaison with the local specialist services ensures that pupils benefit from a wide range of support for their different needs.

Sixth form

Assessment

68. Subject departments assess students on a regular and frequent basis. Assessments are accurate and inform the student how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students' progress is accurately recorded and appropriate targets are set. Particularly good practice was observed in physics where on occasions students assessed their own work alongside the teacher. This resulted in a constructive dialogue and improved understanding. Assessments made by subject teachers are closely aligned to examination requirements. Some departments use assessment to assist future planning, such as in information technology where the computing course is being phased out, due to disappointing examination results, to be replaced with an ICT course, more related to students' previous experience. However, teachers could make more use of test and examination data such as GCSE results to calculate the value-added by their teaching, and to set targets for student achievement.

69. Departments hold good records of pupils' attainment and progress and this information is made available to parents and students in informative interim and final reports. However, tutors do not currently have easy access to an up-to-date overview of students' academic work which restricts their ability to give fast and appropriate guidance.

Advice, support and guidance

70. The majority of students in reply to the sixth form survey indicated that they feel well supported if they have personal problems, and that they find their teachers are helpful. Students, did however, indicate a significant degree of concern about some aspects of advice and guidance. From the survey more than 40 per cent of students do not feel they received constructive enough advice on what they should do in the sixth form, or that they are well advised about what to do after they leave school. The guidance received by students is not entirely satisfactory, a view endorsed by many students. The tutor system does not effectively deal with the concerns that students have when starting their sixth form course. The 15 minutes of tutor time allocated each day is not effective, principally because of the lack of structure and the poor attendance by students. However, students receive good guidance from their course teachers which they appreciate. In addition, the school plans to hold counselling days when all students will have the opportunity to discuss on a one-to-one basis their progress and any concerns they may have.

71. Careers guidance is not effective for all. All students studying courses at an A-level have a fortnightly lesson on careers with the careers specialist in the school, which affords them good support. This option is not available to those following the intermediate or foundation GNVQ courses because of timetable clashes. These students have access to the external careers service for careers interviews and occasional workshops, but do not have a timetabled formal programme of career skills advice. The careers library is used as a teaching classroom, thus students do not have ready access to the materials during their free periods. Furthermore, the students do not have easy access to computers in their centre so that they can use careers and skill profile software packages. As a result, careers information is not easily accessible and there are few links with employers, further education colleges and work-based training. For most students' work experience is only arranged by request.

72. The siting of the school detention room in the sixth form centre disturbs the ethos, as the pupils in detention are at times noisy. Students lack adequate areas to work quietly in their centre and this does not aid the development of independent study skills.

73. Students generally enjoy being in the sixth form and have an appropriate influence on school life and decision making. The student involvement in their own committee and the student council is very effective. Students feel they are afforded sufficient independence but would like better study facilities. During their free time they can leave the site to study. Most use this option responsibly. The attendance procedures are too lax. Teachers are not always sure of how many should be present at their lesson and there is a low attendance at the morning registration sessions, although students do sign in subsequently. During the inspection week, attendance was a cause for concern, with the majority of lessons having less than 100 per cent attendance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

74. Whilst parents recognise recent improvements in the running of the school they are not completely satisfied. Most believe that the school expects their children to work hard and are pleased with the teaching, management and approachable climate at the school. A significant number of parents who responded to the questionnaire are not satisfied with their partnership with the school, homework, information about progress, behaviour standards and the range of extra-curricular activities.

75. The inspectors agree with some of the parents' positive views, although they judge the overall quality of teaching to be satisfactory rather than good. They recognise that parents' concerns have been justified. However, the basis for many of the concerns is historical, a result of some previous unclear communication systems and practices. At the time of inspection there was much evidence of improved systems and a more effective focus for communication between school and home with the newly appointed year managers. The school is tackling parents' concern for better information about progress. Improved assessment and recording procedures are enabling the school to identify children's progress with more precision. The annual reports now sent to parents about their children's progress are very good. They give a clear picture of the child's attainment. In addition the school sends an interim report on progress; this is good practice.

76. A very high number of parents completed and returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, suggesting a good level of interest in their children's education. Partnership with parents is improving and is satisfactory. Parents of selected Year 11 pupils were invited to meetings to help them support their children's GCSE examination work. These are successful initiatives, but in general there is scope for the school to provide more opportunities for parents to support their children's learning. The school is responsive to parents' views and has improved the foyer and provided an interview room in response to their suggestions. The school also seeks their opinions through a readers' panel, which ensures that written communications are of good quality. Parents give good help to the school. The small but dedicated parents' association has helped to revitalise the school's computing facilities. Several parents join the Saturday workgroup to help improve the environment or assist with trips and field studies. Parents give sound support for their children's learning by supporting the improved homework arrangements, and by their attendance at the annual consultation meetings with teachers.

77. The school has a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are generally very appreciative of the work done by teachers and support staff and give their children encouragement and help in their efforts to achieve success in school work and personal development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

78. The overall leadership and management of the school has been strengthened, and is now good. Since the previous inspection in 1996, a new headteacher has been recently appointed, and a forceful impetus for improvement has been established. A clear sense of purpose and direction is emerging, and there is a growing determination to raise standards.

79. The governing body is conscientious and concerned for the well-being of the school. Their business is discharged effectively through a clear committee structure and regular programme of meetings. They are now developing a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are developing productive links with the headteacher and staff. Through the headteacher, they are now beginning to check on standards, and receive regular reports from subject heads. In the past they have not been sufficiently aware of budget and performance weaknesses. Nor have they reflected critically, or taken sufficient initiative to check that standards and progress have been satisfactory. A more secure commitment to monitoring the school's performance is now emerging, and links with the headteacher and core management team are strong. Governors are fulfilling most of their statutory duties, including setting targets for GCSE examination results. Their action plan in response to the previous inspection has been reasonably successful, for example, in tackling identified health and safety issues. However, despite improvements in provision, the statutory requirements for information technology are not met in Years 10-11. The time allocated to religious education is below the recommended amount, with no provision in the sixth form, and arrangements for

collective worship remain unsatisfactory. The governing body has recently adopted a new equal opportunities policy. It illustrates the school's commitment to providing equal opportunities for its pupils and students but does not include teaching and non-teaching staff. However, equality of opportunity and inclusion are very positive features of the school.

80. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good, and his appointment in 2000 has resulted in considerable structural improvement and a much sharper focus on raising standards. In a short space of time, with the support of the core management team, he has reviewed the needs of the school, and moved swiftly with a series of structural and management changes designed to help the school towards improved performance. After consultation with governors, staff, parents and pupils the aims of the school have been confirmed. The headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff, and the governors have strongly endorsed his clear vision for the future development of the school. An agenda for improvement has been set in place in a thoughtful, humane manner. Staff are responding to the open approach to management being adopted, the increased accountability and to the challenging pace at which initiatives have been introduced. There has been a positive impact in a wide range of important areas, including revised management structures, clear roles and responsibilities reflected in job descriptions, the introduction of the school's development planning and target setting processes, and the associated formal faculty review procedures. The headteacher and core management team work well together to provide consistent leadership and educational direction for the school. As yet, consistent use is not being made of available data on pupils' prior attainment as a basis for checking progress in subjects. The recently established line management structure should focus sharply on the rigorous analysis of test and examination results by the core management team, and enable the school to develop its strengths and target areas for support and improvement, both within and across subjects.

81. The revised arrangements for pastoral support are beginning to have positive impact. Within the new year system, the tracking of pupils' academic and personal progress is improving, as are links with parents. There is need to strengthen the role of the form tutor, and ensure a consistent contribution to this monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development.

82. Subjects are well managed and organised, although the faculty structure places disproportionate workloads on some middle managers, for example, in the humanities. There is an increasing sense of responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, and for the tracking of pupils' progress. However, with the exception of design and technology, information technology, science, religious education and art, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet well developed. As a result, there is insufficient debate about teaching skills and how pupils learn. Strategies such as the regular scrutiny by subject heads of pupils' books and teachers' marking, and the formal observation and review of lessons are not yet consistently evident in the majority of subjects. This important element of management responsibility is a weakness which requires greater emphasis in the work of subject heads and the core leadership team.

83. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. After a period of discontinuity a coordinator of learning support was appointed in 2001 and is establishing clear systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of all pupils with special educational needs. Responsibilities are shared between this senior teacher and the head of special needs who has the oversight of pupils with statements of special educational need. Statutory requirements in respect of these pupils are met and records are kept in an exemplary way. The learning support staff form a strong team and the designated governor brings experience and enthusiasm to her work. The school makes sound strategic use of the resources for special educational needs including specific grants such as that for the summer school for gifted and talented pupils.

84. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been just satisfactory because standards have not improved sufficiently. Much of the positive development has taken place in the past year; an extensive development of the school's infrastructure has taken place, with many initiatives which are not yet having impact on standards, but which have the potential to promote improved outcomes. In particular, the faculty review framework, linked to the new whole-school and subject strategic planning, and the developing monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are cornerstones for future progress.

Progress in tackling the key issues from the previous report has been satisfactory. The governors' action planning was secure, and the school's response to the issues has accelerated following the appointment of the current headteacher. In particular, curricular arrangements for music and design and technology have been improved, and good opportunities for pupil responsibility have been introduced with the new school and year councils. The school development plan now includes clear evaluation procedures, and provision for information technology has improved (but remains below expected levels). Improvements have been made to the curriculum, but more need to be done, and spiritual development remains unsatisfactory, as before. However, the school's leadership is committed to driving up standards – its developing sense of purpose and the recent changes put in place by the new headteacher place the school in an increasingly stronger position as it enters the next phase of its development.

85. The school now has sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers to cover the subjects it teaches both in the main school and in the sixth form. Over the past two years a large number of temporary teachers has been employed which has had a negative effect on standards of work. These temporary and supply teachers have now been replaced with permanent staff. Only in English, where one permanent post remains unfilled, is there a concern. There is a good match between teachers' initial qualifications and the subjects taught. Staff development is carefully organised and well managed and reflects the priorities of the whole school as well as subject departments. Systems for the induction of new staff are good. There is a good match of support staff to the demands of the curriculum. The administrative staffing structure has improved since the previous inspection and has recently been strengthened through the appointments of a business manager and an office manager.

86. Accommodation has greatly improved since the previous inspection but is still unsatisfactory overall. Sixth form accommodation is poor. There is no sixth form library or resource centre for students to use for research or private study. Despite efforts by a number of students, the sixth form centre does not provide a pleasant learning environment, and the lack of care by a small minority of students, plus a general absence of care and maintenance has given it a very run down appearance. The school library is too small for a school of this size and though it is well used, with over twenty thousand individual loans taking place each year the stock, both fiction and non-fiction, is below the expected level. The careers library doubles as a classroom. Toilets are in an unsatisfactory condition, some lacking door locks, mirrors and hand-drying facilities. There is only one practice room for music and the six mathematics teachers have access to only five specialist classrooms. There is a lack of storage space in art, and accommodation for modern foreign languages is scattered around the school. The health and safety issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been successfully tackled and the buildings development plan includes upgrades to accommodation for the sixth form, the library and music, as well as a refurbishment of toilet areas.

87. Learning resources are unsatisfactory, especially for sixth form students who have no separate library facility or resource base providing access to computers and the Internet. The library houses a small number of computers that are well used by pupils and sixth form pupils but these are inadequate for whole school use. The ratio of pupils and students to computers has doubled since the previous inspection but is still now only at half the national average. Resources in history are inadequate. In physical education there are not enough textbooks for the examination courses. In music there are insufficient computer resources to teach the National Curriculum efficiently to pupils in Years 7-9.

88. Systems for financial planning are now very good. The budget is carefully planned and effectively administered. Together the new headteacher and recently appointed business manager have worked hard to ensure that the budget is secure. Forecast implications are clearly established, principles of best value are applied stringently, and specific grant is always used for its designated purpose. Financial control is very good, and regular budget statements are monitored carefully by the business manager, headteacher and governors.

89. The school receives average funding per pupil. Pupils' attainment and circumstances when they join the school are below average. Teaching and the learning it generates are satisfactory, as are the attitudes and personal development of the pupils. Although examination results are below average, they represent satisfactory achievement from relatively modest starting points. School leadership and

management are now good, and taking all these factors into account, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

90. Overall leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, with some strengths together with important areas for improvement.

91. Since the previous inspection there has been little change in the management of the sixth form. Only very recently has there been review and identification of priorities for development, and these have not yet been formalised into a specific development plan for the sixth form. The appointment of the new headteacher in 2000 has resulted in some sharpening of course provision and entry policy, but more needs to be done. Governors have been supportive, but insufficiently critical of performance in the past, and have not been sufficiently engaged in strategic planning for the development of the sixth form. The statutory requirement for religious education in the sixth form is not met.

92. The new line management structure introduced by the headteacher will strengthen leadership in the sixth form. Students are well supported generally, despite weaknesses in guidance, both by the head of the sixth form and their subject teachers. As a result, most are able to complete their chosen courses successfully.

93. The analysis of data relating to predicted student performance based on their previous GCSE attainment is not yet used rigorously enough to check progress, and monitor the performance of both students and subjects. Subject leadership in the sixth form is generally good, and is very good in geography. Organisation and administration are secure, but generally, in subjects and across the sixth form, there is insufficient monitoring of subject performance which then leads to identified strategies for improvement.

Resources

94. The sixth form centre has no resources for individual study and is mainly used for formal lessons and as a social area. The siting of the behaviour referral unit in the centre also militates against its use for independent learning. In the main school the library is small and used for teaching and, although students can work on any computers that are not being used, they have no certainty of being able to do so when they want. Students with difficult home circumstances are disadvantaged.

95. The poor provision for independent study and research is a weakness which is affecting standards. Outside formal lessons there is very little opportunity for students to study effectively, and this has impact on the ethos and focus of the sixth form. Many students go home to study rather than continue their work in school. This is inefficient, and also reduces the positive potential effect for sixth form students as role models and key members of the school community.

96. The school has recognised that there are a number of areas which need improvement and has recently produced a development plan which identifies most of the points referred to above. It now needs details such as costings and action dates to be added so it can become a working document which will improve sixth form provision.

97. Funding arrangements for the sixth form are satisfactory and costs are balanced in relation to the whole school. As a result, the sixth form is financially efficient, although curriculum teaching time is lower than is usually found. The take-up for the enrichment areas of the sixth form curriculum is low, for example, in general studies, and some A-level teaching groups are also low. As a result, although financial costs are appropriate, there is some inefficiency which is made worse by the poor provision of study facilities and computer access. However, given the secure quality of teaching, and the satisfactory student achievement, the sixth form is cost effective, and provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of educational provision in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching;
 - ensuring high standards of behaviour and response in all lessons;
 - ensuring a higher level of rigour and challenge in the work presented.

- (2) Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school, and the consistency of standards in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring consistent responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in subjects;
 - identifying those aspects of teaching and learning which require improvement;
 - ensuring a widespread use of assessment information and data to set targets and check the progress of pupils and students;
 - disseminating widely the good range of successful teaching and learning in the school.

- (3) Improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all pupils by:
 - implementing a systematic approach to the teaching of literacy skills through all subjects;
 - confirming and implementing a whole-school strategy for teaching numeracy skills through all subjects.

- (4) Improve the attitudes, behaviour and attendance of a small minority of pupils by:
 - developing consistent strategies for the management of challenging behaviour in the classroom;
 - monitoring the use and effectiveness of agreed strategies for rewards and sanctions;
 - wider analysis of attendance data;
 - adopting a rigorous and wide-ranging approach to improving attendance, in partnership with parents, LEA, and other appropriate agencies.

- (5) Improve provision for, and attainment in information technology by:
 - ensuring the widespread development and application of pupils' skills in information technology across all subjects;
 - meeting National Curriculum requirements in Years 10 and 11;
 - developing effective assessment procedures which audit and record pupils' experience and achievement in information technology across the curriculum;
 - increasing computer provision, as finances allow.

Sixth form

Improve provision for the sixth form by:

- (1) improving students' skills in independent learning and research;
- (2) improving accommodation, including facilities for private study, library and multi-media resources;
- (3) enhancing the quality and range of the sixth form enrichment curriculum, for example, general studies, key skills, PSHE (including religious education), and support/guidance for students, including careers advice;
- (4) adopting a more rigorous approach to improving attendance for some students.

In addition to the key issues, the following should be considered:

- improving provision for the spiritual development of pupils;
- fulfilling statutory requirements for collective worship.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	133
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	18	47	55	11	1	0
Percentage	1	14	35	41	8	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	4	25	25	2	0	0
Percentage	0	7	45	45	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1097	132
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	104	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	38	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	233	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	47

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	90	106	196

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	55	50
	Girls	80	60	61
	Total	122	115	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (34)	59 (51)	57 (41)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (11)	37 (31)	27 (11)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	34	57	51
	Girls	68	62	61
	Total	102	119	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (38)	61 (54)	57 (48)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (19)	33 (31)	29 (21)
	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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	83	78	161

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	70	75
	Girls	38	70	74
	Total	61	140	149
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	38 (39)	87 (94)	93 (97)
	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 pupil	School	37
	National	38.4

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	22	45

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	13.0	8.2	11.0	3.0	3.5	3.3
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	8	87.5
	National		-

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	-	-
	National		-

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	21
Indian	16
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	1062
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y7– Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	295

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	51.9
Key Stage 4	47.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35.9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	3	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	45	
Other minority ethnic groups	2	

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	2865036
Total expenditure	2867530
Expenditure per pupil	2565
Balance brought forward from previous year	238162
Balance carried forward to next year	235668

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	977
Number of questionnaires returned	466

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	62	12	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	16	72	7	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	57	17	5	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	55	18	11	4
The teaching is good.	9	77	8	4	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	54	18	9	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	26	57	13	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	36	59	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	10	57	26	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	10	74	10	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	9	69	16	4	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	55	16	5	15

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results in 2001, when pupils did relatively better in language and literature than in a number of other subjects.
- Each year almost all pupils are entered for GCSE English language and achieve a pass grade.
- Teachers' planning for lessons, and the way in which the context and aims of the lesson are made clear to pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching, especially in Years 7-9. Pupils need better analytical skills for studying literature, and for writing in a wider range of styles.
- National test results at the end of Year 9, particularly those achieved by more able pupils.
- General expectations of pupils' behaviour, attitude and effort in lessons.
- The regularity and challenge of homework, and the detail and helpfulness of marking.

99. Standards in examinations have fallen slightly since the last inspection. Results in national tests in English taken at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were below the national average because of the relatively small number of pupils gaining the higher grades. Results were well below those achieved in schools with a similar intake of pupils. They showed improvement on those gained in 1999 and equalled the 1998 results. Over the three years boys did less well than girls. The erratic trend continued in 2001, when results fell once again and were inferior to those achieved by the same pupils in mathematics and science.

100. GCSE results for English language in 2000 were below the national average, those for English literature well below. Boys did better than girls in both subjects. These results represented a decline from 1998 and 1999, particularly in literature where many pupils fared less well than in other subjects. Media studies was taken by a relatively high proportion of the year group, and results were above the national average and better than those achieved in most other subjects in the school. 2001 results in English language and literature were well below those in all schools, but pupils did better in them than in many other subjects in the school. In both subjects over the years, a strength is the fact that almost every candidate has gained a pass grade at GCSE.

101. Standards of work, judged from lessons and samples of pupils' books and files, are well below national average by the end of Year 9 and below average by the end of Year 11. In all years pupils show positive attitudes to reading, partly because of timetabled visits to the library in Years 7-9, but too few are confident reading aloud. Almost all can glean information from books, and half consider choosing books which will extend their knowledge or understanding. This is not the case with fiction, where few pupils choose quality books and finish reading them. By the age of 14, pupils have satisfactory speaking and listening skills, but these are not well used in whole class discussion. The very conscientious do use listening skills well, and the more quick-minded participate in discussion, but oral skills for many pupils are under-used. This was a feature commented on during the previous inspection. In contrast, pupils are effective in pair and small group work. Most, including lower attainers, show reasonable accuracy in handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Average attaining pupils work neatly but spend too much time on projects and illustration. When writing about literature they never get beyond reviews or brief statements about character and plot. Higher attainers write lively narrative, and their poetry often shows skilled word use. However, the range of styles and techniques is narrow and skills such as analysis and appreciation of literature, factual reporting, and presenting contrasting views are limited.

102. By the age of 16 pupils are competent informal speakers, but a smaller proportion than one would expect are able to use speech to exchange and develop ideas in class. Only higher attainers use Standard English with ease; other pupils attempt formal English but become frustrated and either give up, or resort to casual or clumsy expression. In contrast much written work is well structured and nearly all pupils are able to communicate when writing at length. Pupils of average ability explain ideas clearly and justify them with appropriate detail, evidence, or reference to a text. Higher attaining pupils make up for some lack of technical vocabulary by lively critical response which shows empathy and insight, as well as the ability to balance and contrast ideas. Reading skills are average, but only higher attainers identify the style of a piece or appreciate inferences within it.

103. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment, although those currently in Year 7 are close to the national average. Achievement in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory because of the narrow range of work, and a lack of depth in the work expected of the more able pupils. The past emphasis on the appearance of work rather than its substance, and on creativity at the expense of analysis and opinion, has limited achievement, especially by boys. Given these weaknesses, achievement in Years 10-11 is satisfactory, the more so in English language. This is because a clear understanding of examination requirements is behind teachers' planning and pupils' efforts. The result is conscientious and appropriate coursework and sound strategies for tackling timed questions. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in all years because teachers appreciate what they are good at and what they find difficult, and adjust work accordingly. Grouping pupils by ability, support within some lessons, and withdrawal for literacy work also have a positive impact.

104. Pupils' attitudes to English are satisfactory. In the last report they were commented on as good. The majority of pupils are amenable and make a good effort with written work which is often, however, too undemanding in Years 7-9 and for more able pupils. In some classes the drive, focus and motivation of some groups is lacking: inattention or superficial focus result. This is most evident in the limited involvement of most pupils in class discussion. A high ability Year 11 class made only satisfactory progress in studying 'Animal Farm' because the teacher spent too long on generalised questions about the nature of heroism without relating ideas back to the other lesson aims. In contrast, and because of tolerant relationships, pupils gained more in the paired discussion work which followed. Too many pupils are lackadaisical about getting to lessons on time, and settling down to work when they arrive. A minority of pupils can be testing of authority. An unsatisfactory rate of learning is the result on occasion. More instances of good and stimulating teaching would help attitudes since a number of pupils are capable of better when teachers' expectations of work and behaviour are higher, and made more clear.

105. The overall quality of English teaching is satisfactory. However, some teaching during the inspection was unsatisfactory, and the proportion of good or better teaching was lower than in most schools. Although satisfactory teaching and learning was seen in lessons in Years 7-9, the analysis of work of pupils in Years 8 and 9 showed that teaching at Key Stage 3 had been unsatisfactory over time, producing variable and disappointing exam results at 14. This is because pupils had been encouraged to write in too narrow a range of styles, and more demanding work and approaches for more able pupils had not been thought through. The teaching of literature and its related skills has been a weakness: pupils experience too little quality literature in their early years and are insufficiently aware of the cultural heritage. The teaching of literacy skills within Year 7 classes has been well planned and is a good feature of the lessons.

106. GCSE files and examination results testify to some good teaching to older pupils, and satisfactory teaching and learning overall in Years 10-11. Teachers are knowledgeable: they plan lessons carefully, giving thought as to how best to make the topic accessible to the class. The purpose of a lesson is outlined at the beginning, and its success evaluated at the end. A Year 11 class improved their awareness of the relationships between the characters in 'Of Mice and Men', and gained insight into their situations, when the teacher alternated spirited reading to bring the text alive with carefully phrased questions. On less successful occasions teachers assume that finishing a task means that pupils have understood it, and gained fully from it. Most classes are well organised, but pupil management is too varied and sometimes reliant on the mood or willingness of a minority of pupils. Classes in Years 10-11 are generally well managed.

107. A general weakness of too many lessons is inconsistent expectations of work and behaviour. When coupled with too much mediocre whole class discussion which lasts too long, or lack of insistence on quiet during written tasks, the depth of learning or the rate of progress become unsatisfactory. A Year 10 class studying 'An Inspector Calls' spent too long on mundane, factual information because the teacher did not motivate and manage the class sufficiently well. Some homework is not demanding, nor precise enough in terms of the skills which pupils are expected to use and develop. Marking is regular and usually accurate, but levels of correction and advice are inconsistent, especially in Years 7-9, so that too many pupils do not have a clear idea of how to improve their work.

108. Improvement since the previous report has been unsatisfactory. The head of department and teachers have continued to work hard, but the curriculum focus in Years 7-9 has become unbalanced. For top sets this has been made worse by the decision to take time from their English lessons in Years 8 and 9 to allow a second foreign language to be taught. The department has not been able to meet its obligation to use and enhance ICT skills because of the past lack of access to computers. This was criticised in the last report. Staffing has been, and remains, unstable with absence and changes affecting the continuity of teaching. The head of department has had significant whole school responsibilities which have restricted his ability to lead the department effectively. Nonetheless, the management and organisation of the English department is satisfactory. GCSE results have remained comparable with those in other subjects. There is a shared desire to improve, and a clearer vision of how this can be achieved.

109. The library remains the small but valuable resource noted in the previous inspection. It is very well organised, making good use of specialist staff and new technology, and has developed into a learning and research centre. There is a good induction programme for new pupils. Stock is satisfactory in terms of range, condition and quality. Whilst the provision of texts to support A-level courses has improved since the previous inspection, the stock here remains limited. A good response to a criticism about books relating to other cultures and traditions has been made. Pupils value the library, and it is sensibly used by good numbers every lunchtime. They also respect the helpfulness and interest of library staff, who provide a variety of quizzes, readings and events to stimulate the idea of the library as a centre for enjoyment and research.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching.
- Results in National Curriculum tests are improving.
- GCSE results in statistics are above the national average.

Areas for improvement

- Develop marking and assessment procedures to include short-term pupil targets so that any under-achievement is more speedily identified and corrected.
- Promote learning and retention by adopting a more structured approach to the presentation of solutions.
- Enrich and support pupils' learning by increasing the use of information and communications technology.
- Monitor teaching so as to ensure consistency of provision and share good practice.

110. Year 9 pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests has improved in each of the last three years, having declined in the immediate years after the previous inspection. In the 2000 tests their results were below the national average and, on the basis of the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, well below those achieved by pupils in similar schools. However, the number of pupils who achieved the higher National Curriculum levels was in line with national average. The comparison between the performance of girls and boys varies from year to year. In 2000 their results were similar

but, unlike the national picture, over the previous two years boys' results have been lower than girls' results. The 2001 results indicate that an improving trend has been sustained.

111. In the 2000 GCSE examination results were below average. The proportion of pupils who achieved a grade within the A*-G range was in line with the national average. The number achieving grades A*-C was well below the national average. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-G has increased, whilst the proportion achieving grades A*-C has decreased. In the 2000 examinations the percentage of girls obtaining grades A*-C was significantly greater than the percentage of boys, and most boys and girls performed less well in mathematics than in their other subjects. The relative performance of boys and girls at grades A*-C has fluctuated greatly and in the previous two years the number of boys who obtained grades A*-C significantly exceeded the number of girls. Their combined results have been similar over the last four years, and in 2001 the difference between girls' and boys' results was minimal. Each year a group of twenty or more pupils takes GCSE statistics as one of their option subjects and their results in 2000 were well above the national average, particularly in terms of the proportion achieving an A grade. Similar statistics results were obtained in the 2001 examinations.

112. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below the national average. They are slightly higher than indicated by examination and test results and in lessons there is no discernible difference in the attainment or involvement of boys and girls. Recent improvements, including the revision of schemes of work that reflect a new GCSE course, and the national numeracy strategy, have not been in place long enough to be fully reflected in pupils' work. They are having a greater impetus now that frequent and unsettling staffing changes during the past few years have been largely resolved. Inadequate staffing caused discontinuity of teaching and had a significant detrimental effect on standards and results in public examinations. Overall, pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory.

113. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory overall, and range from unsatisfactory to very good. There is more very good teaching than at the time of the last inspection, and there are no significant differences in the teaching quality across the various year groups. Teaching is good or very good in half of lessons, and the remainder is satisfactory except for a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in the lower school. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when unacceptable behaviour by a minority of pupils impedes the learning of the majority because the teacher's classroom management skills are insufficient to meet the challenge. All the teachers' have a good knowledge of the subject, and the best teachers use this command to frame questions and explanations in a way that pupils' learning is achieved through understanding. In the better lessons this skill is effectively used in teasing out points, often by way of incorrect responses, without making things too easy for the pupils by readily giving them the answers as well as the questions. Pupils are confident and secure with their teachers and most willingly take part during lessons. A feature of these exchanges is the due respect shown by pupils when one of their peers is either asking or answering questions.

114. In the very good lessons, a brisk pace is maintained by setting realistic time limits for the completion of a variety of tasks, and the work is structured to ensure that consolidation is accompanied by the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils was fully engaged with the teacher in discussing a range of strategies for calculating the number of fixtures required to fulfil a season of team games. The teacher radiated infectious enthusiasm and this resulted in a very brisk, challenging pace. The work catered for individual pupils' needs and there was an appropriate balance between allowing pupils to work independently and giving assistance. By the end of the lesson all of the pupils had a good grasp of the emerging patterns resulting from their investigations, and most were able to generalise their findings in algebraic form.

115. In less successful lessons there is insufficient dialogue between the teacher and pupils because the teacher relies too much on the textbook for determining the style and content of the lesson. Although the teacher's explanations usually have clarity the pupils are passive and therefore not required to make the necessary intellectual effort. There is over-reliance on pupils being self-motivated and, consequently, some learning lacks enthusiasm and depth of understanding.

116. Learning is often enhanced by the use of “warm-up” mental arithmetic exercises, but provision is not consistent and varies from teacher to teacher. Presentation of work often lacks structure and because of this it does not aid retention, and does not promote an understanding of the logical stages used in setting out an answer. The lack of use of information and communications technology, indicated in the previous report, remains an issue and currently its use is insufficient to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The emphasis on correct mathematical vocabulary is highlighted in all mathematics rooms and most teachers take care to emphasise its importance. However, the rate of learning is slowed in Year 10, where the timetabling of four lessons in one week, and only one in the next is both inefficient and unsatisfactory.

117. Teachers give generously of their own time in additional sessions to help pupils to either overcome difficulties or meet an individual need for more challenging work. For example, a current Year 11 pupil has already achieved high marks on two AS modules, having achieved an A* grade in GCSE mathematics at the end of her Year 9. This has been achieved without a specific allocation of curriculum time. In general, pupils are now covering the same topics at levels that match their prior attainment, and pupils in the highest sets make the greatest progress. The achievement of higher and lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory but some average attainers continue to produce work of a lower quality and quantity than that typically seen.

118. Since the last inspection there have been some positive changes but the overall level of improvement has been unsatisfactory, mainly because a great deal of energy has necessarily been directed at coping with staffing deficiencies rather than developmental matters. The management of the faculty is sound. The leadership is energetic and enthusiastic and development planning is now much more sharply focused. However, the monitoring role of the head of faculty is not of a sufficiently high profile to ensure that there is consistency of provision and a sharing of good practice. For example, there are variations in the marking and assessment of work so that the potential for using assessment to set short-term targets for each pupil that speedily identify any under-achievement is not realised.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Assessment, record keeping and target setting are good.
- Lessons are well planned and organised.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient investigative work in Years 7-9.
- There is insufficient use of ICT at both key stages.
- Most able pupils need to be challenged more, especially in Years 10-11.

119. In 2000, the Key Stage 3 national test results were average, although well below average in comparison with similar schools. The attainment of girls was slightly better than the boys. These results were an improvement on the 1999 results which were below average, and slightly better than those for 1998. The results for 2001 have shown a further slight improvement. Overall, there has been an upward trend since the last inspection.

120. The GCSE results for 2000 were just below national average, although better than in mathematics and English. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. These results were an improvement on the 1998 and 1999 results, when again there was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The results for 2001, however, have dipped, although these results were those of pupils who achieved poor results at age 14 in 1999.

121. Inspection evidence shows that the standard of work seen is average, and is better than the examination results indicate. Higher attainers in Year 9 can discuss the requirements for photosynthesis, whilst lower attaining pupils can describe how light is reflected at plane surfaces. In Years 10-11, higher attainers are able to discuss families of elements within the periodic table and ask searching questions, whilst others are able to describe the separation of hydrocarbons by fractional distillation. A small group of lower attainers, however, have difficulty in describing basic tests for various gases. Work in exercise books shows that pupils in Years 10-11 can carry out scientific calculations, plot graphs and handle data competently. Most pupils can express ideas well because key words and important terminology are emphasised during lessons.

122. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and those who have classroom support benefit from it. Overall, there is little difference between the progress of boys and girls and very few pupils for whom English is a second language were seen during the inspection week.

123. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils during lessons is good across the school, with the exception of a very small number of low attaining Year 11 pupils who show little interest in work. Most pupils arrive promptly to lessons and quickly settle down. They listen attentively when required and are willing to answer questions and make valuable contributions to discussion sessions, particularly in Years 7-9. Most of them remain on task during written work, and during practical sessions they listen carefully to instructions and work co-operatively together, showing respect for each others' ideas. Pupils often take responsibility for various tasks and help in the distribution and collection of apparatus. They pay careful attention to safety issues, such as the wearing of goggles, and handle chemicals and apparatus with care. The majority of pupils take a pride in their written work paying attention to presentation, producing neat handwriting, carefully drawn diagrams and accurately drawn graphs and tables of data. Most pupils throughout the school enjoy science and find it interesting, particularly those in Years 7-9.

124. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although it is better in Years 7-9 than Years 10-11. The higher proportion of good lessons seen in Years 7-9 is due to the greater variety of teaching and learning styles. Work in Years 10-11 relies a lot on the use of worksheets and textbooks. There is little investigative work done in Years 7-9, although the recent introduction of CASE lessons which aim to develop thinking skills, together with a new scheme of work for these pupils, should improve this. Insufficient use of ICT is made in science but the department hopes to improve on this with the acquisition of more computers. Lessons are well planned and organised, teachers are enthusiastic and display a good subject knowledge, so that explanations are clear and accurate. Pupil management is good. There are friendly relationships but firm discipline, and pupils are given plenty of praise and encouragement with rewards for good work. This results in a pleasant learning environment in which pupils are keen to learn.

125. At the beginning of lessons aims are clearly stated so that pupils are fully aware of what they are to learn, and reviews at the end of each lesson help to consolidate learning. In most lessons, work is carefully matched to pupils' learning needs, although some high attainers in Years 10-11 are insufficiently challenged. Schemes of work have in-built assessment tests which are used regularly. The results are shared with pupils and used for target setting, so that they know which National Curriculum level they are working at, or which grade they are likely to achieve at GCSE level. These targets encourage pupils to work harder. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. Books are regularly marked and annotated with constructive criticism and guidance, as well as praise and encouragement to motivate pupils. There are clear marking guidelines displayed in the department so that pupils know what their marks mean.

126. Management of the department is good. There is strong leadership with a good team ethos. All staff are committed to improving results and several initiatives have been put into place within the last two years, the positive effects of which are beginning to be seen in lessons. There is good record keeping with efficient monitoring and evaluation of pupil progress. The department receives insufficient, but good technical support. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory and the learning environment is improved by the attractive displays of pupils' work. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good: pupils learn well within the lessons and make good progress.
- Pupils are well motivated and show interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to ability.

Areas for improvement

- The under-use of homework, particularly for the development of research skills.
- Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning.
- The accommodation and environment of the department.

127. The number of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 was close to the national average. This reflected good improvement from the previous two years when the standards achieved were well below. The number of pupils gaining grades A*-G has been consistently average. The number of pupils gaining the top grade of A* was above the national average. In 2001 the number of pupils gaining the higher grades fell, but pupils continued to perform slightly better in art than in other subjects within the school. The performance of boys and girls has been inconsistent. Boys performed better than girls in 2000 but performed worse in 2001.

128. The standards in art and design seen during the inspection show that most pupils by Year 9 are generally achieving at or close to the standards expected nationally. They understand concepts and processes and most apply technical skills reasonably competently. Most are familiar with art vocabulary and use it appropriately. In a Year 9 lesson pupils could explain what proportion and scale meant and applied it correctly to quite complex compositions of jungle scenes based on the work of Rousseau. Higher attaining pupils showed a good understanding of perspective and used it confidently and correctly. Although lower attaining pupils found it difficult to place their animals in their composition at the right size to create distance, they showed a sound understanding of the use of tone to create depth. Understanding of artists' work is less well developed. The achievement of pupils is good across all abilities. They arrive in Year 7 with a wide range of experience and skills, many with below average levels of skills and understanding. They learn quickly because the quality of teaching is mainly good. Those with special educational needs make good progress where lessons build on techniques, and this was evident when a pupil produced a high quality watercolour painting.

129. By Year 11 pupils are achieving at levels just in line with the national average. They show a sound understanding of different forms of visual expression, and use a range of materials and processes to express creative ideas. Pupils are able to explore, interpret and analyse when researching areas such as African art as an influence for large papier-mâché masks. Higher attaining pupils had extended work by experimenting with textile methods, such as those found in Bushonga cloth patterns, before designing the head-dress to accompany it. Where work was below the expected standard, pupils had failed to develop their design ideas and produced work without sufficient research or planning. At this level, pupils are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own work, and study past and contemporary art whilst developing their own style. Overall, the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. For example, a lower attaining pupil made good progress and produced a sculpture of a high standard when using the work of Henry Moore as an influence.

130. Attitudes and behaviour within the department are good. Most pupils respond well to the effective teaching and want to learn. In Years 7-9 they are lively, enthusiastic and at times demanding, but interact well with their teachers. There is a productive working atmosphere in most lessons. Once they have settled down, they listen well to instructions and are keen to participate in activities. In the one Year 9 lesson where the behaviour and attitudes were unsatisfactory, the disruptive behaviour of a small number of pupils slowed the learning of the class. In Years 10-11 pupils show a good level of engagement. They are well motivated, enjoy art and respond to the subject in a mature manner. In

one lesson pupils worked in near silence as they became engrossed in what they were doing. Equipment is shared cooperatively and they respect each other's work, discussing and sharing ideas. Most are committed to improving their work and higher attainers pursue research in their own time. For example, a pupil had photographed Celtic crosses as research for her project whilst on holiday. Where sketchbooks are used well they are of a high standard and consolidate gains in knowledge and understanding, but their use is not consistent across all abilities.

131. The quality of teaching in all years was predominantly good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have developed clear procedures in managing pupils that result in good use being made of time and resources. In the best lessons, the staff give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques and build in an element of humour to maintain pupils' interest. This gives pupils strong direction on what they have to do to achieve, and results in good learning. Since the last inspection, most pupils' confidence has improved through the emphasis that teachers have put on independent learning. It is still an area that is being built on and weaknesses were still evident in one lesson where pupils chose to trace rather than draw freehand. Teaching and learning were good in Years 10-11. The teachers have a good relationship with pupils and offer a high level of individual support, which raises self-esteem and creates a good learning environment. Where teaching was very good, the pupils were stimulated by a display of multi-cultural artefacts. The appropriate tasks, set within given time limits, resulted in the pupils applying themselves with vigour and producing high quality, decisive, confident drawings. Across all years, lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs are given the support and confidence to respond confidently, and teachers channel their strengths into successful outcomes. Teachers have a good level of expertise in ICT and positively encourage its use for research and extensions to work. This is improving the quality of learning and impacting on standards, particularly in the examination classes.

132. The department is well led and managed, and teachers are committed to improving attainment. Assessment structures are sound: pupils are involved in target setting and most had a clear understanding of the level they are working at. Grade criteria are displayed clearly in classrooms. Homework is built into projects, but it would be of further benefit if it were set more frequently, and used to extend research techniques and independent learning. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are in the early stages and need to be built on to ensure the good practice within the department is shared. Links are established with feeder schools and initiatives using ITT students have built on this. The curriculum is strongly enriched by the involvement of pupils in projects in the community, such as improving the environment at a home for elderly persons. Improvement from the last inspection is good, except in the accommodation, which is still in very poor repair.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Substantially improved standards since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' understanding of designing.
- A consistent approach to teaching designing and making.
- Leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for, and use of, computers in designing.
- Management of pupils' behaviour in a minority of lessons.
- The range of drawing techniques used by pupils.

133. Overall, the proportions of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C and grades A*-G in 2000 were slightly above the national average. Their results in design and technology were better than in most of their other subjects. Girls' results were well above average whereas boys' results were just below average. This difference is much more marked than is found nationally. GCSE results in 1998 and 1999 were average. Most recently in 2001, the proportion of pupils awarded grades A*-C was lower

than in 2000, largely because a significant number of pupils achieved marks just below that required for the award of a grade C. Results in textiles are consistently well above average. Results in other areas vary from year to year. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection when GCSE results in design and technology were well below average.

134. There are wide differences in the standards of pupils' work at the beginning of Year 7, but overall they are below average. Pupils make good progress in Years 7-9 and by the end of Year 9 standards are only just below average. This is reflected in teacher assessments for the end of Year 9. Pupils' understanding of designing and their ability to develop a design is generally good because there is a consistent approach in all areas of the subject. They acquire sound making skills in all areas but their range of drawing techniques, whilst adequate to work out their design ideas, needs extending. Lack of access to computers results in very few pupils having the ability to use ICT within designing, and they have no knowledge of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and the most able, make good progress because good individual teaching focuses on pupils' understanding of the subject.

135. In Years 10-11 pupils continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 11 their overall standard is average. The good progress made by pupils with low prior attainment and those with special educational needs as a result of good individual teaching, results in few pupils achieving less than grade F in their GCSE examination. The good progress of pupils with high prior attainment is reflected in the higher than average proportion of pupils awarded grades A* or A. Pupils build on their understanding of, and ability in, designing acquired in Years 7-9. Products are well made. Many pupils create innovative designs, particularly in textiles and resistant materials. Their folders are well presented, although little use is made of ICT except by those pupils with home computers. Some pupils with lower prior attainment find some of the technical aspects of the electronic products course difficult but others have good knowledge of this area.

136. Pupils mostly work hard individually and in groups and contribute readily to discussions. They respond to questions, wish to succeed and take care with their work. They use equipment and materials responsibly. However in the few lessons in which the teacher does not manage the class well, behaviour is unsatisfactory and pupils do not make sufficient progress.

137. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10-11, and satisfactory in Years 7-9 where there were a small number of unsatisfactory lessons. The strength of the teaching is the consistent approach taken to the subject, and particularly the teaching of designing, by all the established teachers. This is the result of good monitoring over several years. However, this is not yet established with all teachers due to staff changes. The pace of most lessons is good and consequently pupils learn well. Teachers make good use of questioning and give good individual help. Work is well marked and pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers did not react soon enough to incidents of misbehaviour and consequently the pace of learning deteriorated. In one class, which was split between practical and theoretical activity, insufficient attention was given to the learning of those pupils engaged in theory tasks.

138. Leadership and management of the subject are good. A clear and appropriate direction has been established and systems are in place which have ensured that improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. However, there are still insufficient computers to ensure that pupils study this aspect of the National Curriculum in design and technology and, whilst there has been some refurbishment, the teaching environment is still inadequate in spite of some good displays of work.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Ensuring progress by monitoring all pupils and expecting them to do their best.
- Very good resources capture pupils' interest and ensure good quality learning.

Areas for improvement

- More challenge, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, by increasing the depth of some topics.
- Expanding fieldwork opportunities in Years 7-9

139. In 2000, GCSE results were above average in terms of A*-G grades and below average in terms of A*-C grades. In 2001 there was a significant decline in the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades. In both years the pupils achieved grades in geography similar to those in their other subjects, and there was no difference between the results of boys and girls.

140. The standards of pupils' work by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are below average. In relation to standards at the start of Year 7, where most pupils cannot distinguish between a map and a picture and have a poor knowledge of basic world geography, they represent good achievement. This good progress is the result of good teaching and learning. Pupils develop their skills and extend their knowledge of location, distributions and geographical processes. Their understanding of processes is least developed, for example in Year 9 higher attaining pupils identify and describe coastal features, but are not challenged to use detailed technical language to explain how they were formed. Average and lower attaining pupils understand the conflicts of quarrying but do not express their ideas at length. In Years 10-11 pupils continue to increase their knowledge and understanding of physical and human geography. Higher attaining pupils produce fieldwork of high quality, making valid conclusions and applying their investigations of Lea Brook to the ordnance survey map. Average and lower attaining pupils are less aware of the limitations of their conclusions and do not extend the work, although much is of good quality due to the re-drafting of their work. Map reading and fieldwork skills are extended gradually in each year, although more opportunities for fieldwork are needed in Years 7-9.

141. The progress of other groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good despite the lack of classroom support. Carefully structured resources enable these pupils to achieve well, for example, when they annotate photographs of the local area.

142. Behaviour is good due to good classroom management and organisation. This has a positive impact on standards. The work of some pupils lacks continuity due to irregular attendance. In Years 10-11 a significant number of pupils demonstrate a distinct lack of interest and enthusiasm for their work in lessons, and this results in learning which is no more than satisfactory despite the good teaching. Units of work in each year provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of independent research.

143. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. During the inspection it was at least good in three-quarters of lessons in Years 7-9, and consistently good in Years 10-11. As a result, pupils' learning was good in Years 7-9, but only satisfactory in Years 10-11 due to the lack of interest shown by some pupils at this stage. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Taking into account the samples of pupils' work, the quality of learning and pupils' achievement, teaching overall is good. Where teaching was good or better very good resources were used to capture pupils' interest and develop their geographic skills. Classroom support was available and used very effectively to ensure the good progress of a group of pupils with low self-esteem and special educational needs. In a good lesson on earthquakes, pupils were challenged to use computers to research and produce a report to compare their effects in developed and less developed countries. The good teaching always ensures secure learning for average and below average pupils, but sometimes fails to challenge and extend the learning of those with higher attainment.

144. Leadership and management of the department are very good. All the courses are planned in detail though there is scope to reduce the breadth and increase the depth of some topics. Assessment data is now being used to monitor pupils' progress. Teaching and pupils' work is monitored effectively. The teachers are well qualified and share good practice and resources. They were led through a very difficult time of teacher shortage last year, and despite this remain enthusiastic, optimistic and determined to raise standards. They practice the school motto and expect pupils to "be their best." As a consequence, improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Improvements in the use of ICT since the previous inspection.
- Curriculum review, and monitoring of teaching and learning is under way.

Areas for improvement

- Need for a more structured approach to improving pupils' literacy skills.
- Teachers need to challenge pupils more and step up the pace of lessons.
- Assessment and standards of marking overall.
- Improved resources.
- Need for clear definition of head of department's role in managing the budget and in setting priorities for staff development.

145. Standards in history are satisfactory at the age of 14, but are unsatisfactory at the age of 16.

146. By the age of 14, most pupils are reaching standards which are in line with the national expectation, and which represent satisfactory achievement. In most classes, pupils are well behaved and are interested in history. In Year 7, pupils were able to recount the main features of life in ancient Rome. They were able to build on this to look at how historical sources such as statues, buildings and weapons can be interpreted. These classes made satisfactory progress in looking at historical evidence. In Year 8, pupils effectively answered questions about life in London in 1606 and to conditions in factories in the 1830s. They used numerical data and documents well to interpret these sources, but their written work needs improvement. Since the previous inspection, some progress has been made by pupils in using computers. From Year 7 onwards, computers help pupils to develop their enquiry skills and good use of the internet is made, for example, in studying the website of Oldham Workhouse in the 1830s. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is hindered by a lack of classroom support and very few books suited to their needs, although their individual learning plans are used in teachers' planning.

147. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were just above the national average and well above the school average. However, in 2001, results have declined, due in part to poor continuity in teaching and learning. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards in Years 10-11 are below average, and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. The trend for twice as many girls as boys to opt for history has continued for a number of years, although both achieve broadly similar examination results. Many boys say they like the subject but are reluctant, given a wide range of choices, to choose a subject that they consider to have a lot of written work. Pupils cover a wide range of cultural and moral issues in the topics they enjoy such as the fate of the Native Americans. However, their weaknesses in writing hold back their progress in a course which is partially assessed by coursework. Their folder work shows a need for a more structured approach, particularly for weaker students, to encourage extended writing and, in particular, writing coherent paragraphs. Assessment is often unsatisfactory because specific weaknesses are not identified and few targets are set to improve work, with many tasks not completed. There is a need to concentrate more on correcting spelling, grammar and sentence construction to enable pupils to progress to raising their grades.

148. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are now all specialists and are working hard to recover from a period of poor non-specialist teaching in the past. Subject knowledge and lesson preparation are satisfactory. Expectations are not high enough, however, and teachers need to step up the pace of lessons, start lessons more promptly, and challenge pupils more, using more up-to-date resources. In one good lesson in Year 11, pupils were briefed about a local history visit to look around the town, spotting important features of early railways. In better lessons, pupils are stimulated by graphic descriptions of events, rapid questions, good video extracts and photographs. As a result, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to relate to the conditions suffered by children in early factories by using good visual materials and were set good tasks within their capabilities. In classes where teaching is otherwise satisfactory, resources are not suitable for all abilities. In one lesson, where teaching was unsatisfactory, lack of challenge and stimulation resulted in disruptive behaviour by a few boys and girls which adversely affected the learning and progress of the whole class.

149. The leadership of the department is more stable than in the immediate past, but is still unsatisfactory. This is because there is no clear definition of the head of department's role in managing the budget, ordering materials or in deciding on staff development priorities. The department is still trying to overcome problems of staffing in the past, which has had effects on standards of work, pupils' behaviour and staff morale. Sound priorities are now being set in the areas of curriculum review and teaching and learning methods, and a start has been made in monitoring teaching and learning. Although there are signs that weaknesses are being tackled, improvement overall since the previous inspection has been insufficient.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management provided by the new coordinator.
- Accommodation.
- Provision of technical support.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards throughout the school.
- The National Curriculum is not being covered by pupils in Years 10-11.
- Unsatisfactory progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
- The number of computers for pupils' use is about half the national average for a school of this size.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects.

150. The vast majority of pupils are not entered for GCSE examinations in ICT. In 2000 only two pupils were entered, one gaining a Grade B and one a Grade C. It is therefore not possible, because of these small numbers, to make a meaningful comparison with other schools.

151. Standards of work seen are well below average in Years 7-9. By Year 9, although the majority of pupils can log on and access a word processing application, even the highest attaining pupils are unable to produce a quality piece of work at the expected standard. Standards are highest in communicating information. Pupils can use a word processing package to input text and incorporate pictures using clip art. A small number of higher attainers, especially those with home computers, can present their work in an interesting and original way. Pupils have a very limited understanding of the use of ICT to solve problems by building models, constructing procedures and then measuring or controlling the results. Although pupils can enter information in a spreadsheet they cannot use the formula even for simple calculations. They are mostly unaware of the advantages of electronic communication and are unfamiliar with e-mail. Although pupils can enter information in a database they are unable to interrogate the information in a meaningful way. Given their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

152. Standards of work seen in Years 10-11 are well below average. Pupils follow a key skills course which does not cover all the elements of the National Curriculum. There is no GCSE course timetabled, though a tiny number of pupils are helped to cover the short GCSE course in their own time. Most pupils have a reasonable fluency in basic operations, can use software packages for desktop publishing and understand the structures of databases and spreadsheets. Given their attainment at the end of Year 9 this represents satisfactory achievement. However, few pupils can make polished presentations of text or numerical data. Design analysis skills are weak and pupils are unable to apply real world applications of ICT to solve problems. Pupils are not yet confident and autonomous users of ICT and have not developed the independent learning skills expected of pupils of this age. In addition, pupils lack awareness of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues associated with the replacement of traditional working practices with new technology.

153. Pupils with special educational needs do not achieve as well as other pupils. This is because teachers are not taking enough care to ensure that pupils can cope with the literacy demands the subject makes; for example, they rarely have special work set and are usually given the same reading and writing tasks to do as the rest of the group.

154. The vast majority of pupils in Years 7-11 come to lessons willing to work hard and do their best. In Years 7-9 attitudes are satisfactory overall; in Years 10-11 they are good. Pupils generally enjoy their work and behaviour is good. They cooperate with each other when sharing resources and use the mouse and keyboard responsibly. They listen to their teachers and endeavour to follow instructions. However, a small minority of boys in Year 10 are sometimes disruptive and badly behaved, often shouting out, using inappropriate language, unplugging computers and refusing to do as their teachers ask.

155. In timetabled lessons of ICT the quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is good in Years 7-9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10-11. In Years 7-9, half of lessons seen were satisfactory, one quarter was good and one quarter was very good. In Years 10-11, half of lessons seen were at least satisfactory, and half were unsatisfactory or poor. In good and very good lessons teachers had good knowledge of their subject and planned lessons carefully, making them interesting and challenging. They shared learning objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and ensured that maximum use was made of the available time. Relationships with pupils were encouraging and supportive and this gave pupils the confidence to ask questions and risk making mistakes. Pupils were managed effectively so that they settled down to work quickly and little time was wasted establishing good order in the classroom. In these lessons pupils made good gains in both knowledge and understanding of the uses of ICT, and acquired appropriate skills in the use of software applications. This good teaching is largely the result of a new appointment and has not yet had time to have a positive impact on pupils' overall achievement. Teaching would be even better if the work was matched more closely to pupils' needs. All pupils are usually set the same work, which is often too demanding for the weaker pupils and sometimes too easy for the higher attaining pupils. To encourage pupils to become independent learners, there is a need for teachers to develop a range of self-help resources that pupils can use independently. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, weak classroom management skills resulted in teachers being unable to control their classes with disruptive pupils preventing other pupils from learning and learning very little themselves.

156. The leadership and management of the subject is good. A new coordinator has recently been appointed and has identified areas for improvement. He is focused on raising standards through the development of pupils' independent learning skills. He has already been involved in monitoring the teaching and learning within the subject. Curriculum changes have been made and the department is now working to a new and more appropriate curriculum. New assessment procedures are being introduced which will allow pupils' progress to be tracked as they move through the school. There remains much to be done, particularly the development of a curriculum plan that recognises, plans for and fully integrates the contribution all subjects should be making to developing and utilising pupils' ICT skills. Since the previous inspection overall improvement has been good. Learning resources have almost doubled but the ratio of computers to pupils is below the national average. There is a need to make existing facilities available to pupils outside lesson times, particularly during lunch and after

school, so that pupils who do not have access to a home computer do not get left behind. The key skills course in Years 10-11 is not an adequate substitute for GCSE.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Provision for high attaining pupils and for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Curriculum in Year 7.
- Access to ICT for all pupils.

French and German

157. GCSE results in French for 2000, when approximately one in three candidates obtained a grade in the range A*-C, were well below the national average. They were also below average for the school. Girls did better than boys, and the gap was wider than that found nationally. Similar results were obtained in 2001. All who were entered for GCSE in a modern language, over 90 per cent of the age group, obtained at least a grade G. Teacher assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 for 2000 were, however, around the national average. They were lower in the previous year, and have declined a little again in 2001. The difference between boys' results and those of girls' was not so marked as in the case of older pupils. In addition to GCSE, ten pupils took a Certificate of Achievement course in French in 2001, following 18 such pupils in 1999. In both years all those entered were successful and the great majority gained distinctions.

158. In German GCSE results in 2000 were better than those in French though still below the national average. However, they were above average for the school. Girls' results were again better than those of boys', by a margin similar to the difference nationally. As in French, all candidates for GCSE obtained at least a grade G. 2001 was a low point, with only 11 per cent of pupils obtaining grade C or better. This reflected the low standards at the end of Year 9 in 1999, achieved by basically the same pupils, but which was further complicated by staffing changes. In addition to GCSE, some ten pupils a year were entered for Certificate of Achievement courses in German in each of the years 1999, 2000 and 2001. All entered were successful, and the majority gained distinctions. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 do not distinguish between the languages.

159. Although there has been improvement, results have not yet recovered to the level seen at the time of the previous inspection.

160. Standards in work seen during the inspection in both languages covered the whole range of attainment usually found in comprehensive schools. Because an improvement in teaching and learning has taken place recently, standards seen in Years 7-9 are average overall. Pupils develop their skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and there is opportunity for some to develop further their existing skills in the use of computers. There is more emphasis on writing than in many schools and, at its best, the study of grammar and structures makes a real contribution to pupils' literacy. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, and of those who do two languages, is good; for other pupils, achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10-11 pupils continue to make satisfactory progress towards GCSE or Certificate of Achievement objectives, beginning and ending their course below average. Overall achievement in both languages is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught, with appropriately matched work and sometimes support from classroom assistants who make use of the foreign language in working with the pupils. Girls reach higher standards than boys as they do in most schools: however, in French, an effort to close the gap and improve standards has been made by setting up two single-sex groups in Year 9, with boys taught by a man and girls taught by a woman.

161. In general pupils' attitudes to French and German are good in response to good teaching, and normally behaviour is at least satisfactory where teachers are established in the school and known to the pupils. However, confrontational behaviour by a minority of older pupils, boys or girls, can disturb the climate for learning, adversely affecting their own learning and that of others.

162. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in both languages and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers have good language skills, often using them to good effect. They plan their lessons in detail, making good use of the time available, and they manage their pupils well. Most members of the faculty teach both languages; this is essential to the curriculum plan of Year 7, which allows pupils to experience both languages in succession, twenty weeks of each. For some pupils this is a bonus, but for the majority it represents a loss of time in their progress towards national expectations at the end of Year 9. Within the faculty there is the ability to write and use software promoting learning in French, but the use of this facility is insufficiently systematic.

163. Some lessons, the majority of those seen in Years 7-9, were good. One Year 7 French class, for example, had already a wider vocabulary than found in similar mixed ability classes in other comprehensive schools. A Year 9 class was using computers to extend knowledge of French fashion vocabulary, whilst a parallel class, but made up entirely of boys, was adding realism to the fashion theme by dressing up, which they would scarcely have done in the presence of girls. The highest attaining pupils, approximately one third of the total number, take both French and German in Years 8 and 9. One such class was doing very good work in German, taught by a native speaker of the language who, as the incoming head of German, is raising expectations in the subject. Samples of some Year 9 work in French and in German display an appropriately advanced knowledge of verb structures which justifies the expectation of a higher grade at GCSE. Pupils are aware of their progress in relation to National Curriculum levels because their work is assessed unit by unit.

164. In Years 10-11 there is appropriate focus on examination preparation. At all levels of attainment pupils learn to read and write, as well as to speak the language and to understand it when spoken by others. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in both languages, though there are times when higher expectations would be appropriate, and there is also the occasional example of poor behaviour. A few pupils take both languages, which provides a basis for advanced level study in both. Teaching also includes careful preparation for the Certificate of Achievement, an established course leading to distinctions at this level for most of the pupils entered, many of them with special educational needs.

165. The faculty structure is appropriate in modern languages, and the interrelationship between French and German functions to the benefit of the pupils, for example, in the development of work with ICT, or in the planning of extra-curricular activities. These include an important new exchange link with a German school and planned school trip to Paris. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to help raise standards. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- High quality of the teachers' musicianship and subject expertise.
- Systematic development of pupils' musicianship because teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' confidence in performing in Years 10-11.
- The use of ICT for composing.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Accommodation, to include practice rooms.

166. Standards of the work of pupils currently in Year 9 have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now average; this judgement closely matches teachers' recent assessments. Pupils begin Year 7 with limited experience in music, and few at that age have begun to learn to play a musical instrument. Given this starting point, pupils' achievement by Year 9 is good. They have developed a secure rhythmic response, read staff notation and are acquiring a satisfactory knowledge of subject language which enables them to comment perceptively on the music they hear. Many pupils readily improvised melodic 'fills' for the class performance of 'Bags Groove', and some quickly mastered simple bass guitar and kit parts to provide a backing. Audience listening skills are not so well developed, so that pupils' concentration on each other's performances is not properly maintained. The lack of practice rooms for group work prevents pupils from evaluating and developing their ideas for composing, and inhibits their ability to work cooperatively. Most sing enthusiastically, but often in the wrong register.

167. Standards of work of the current Year 11 in both performing and composing are average as a result of improved teaching, and represent an improvement on the below average results in the GCSE examination over the past three years. Results are well below those achieved in art and drama. However, groups are small, and in relation to pupils' capability, their achievement is good.

168. More able pupils have secure listening and appraising skills, perform well and create attractive, properly structured compositions which have some memorable features. Less able pupils lack confidence in their performing because they have insufficient technical ability; most can follow guidelines satisfactorily to create short, properly structured compositions, but because of their limited early musical experience their listening and appraising skills are weak. None has had satisfactory access to music technology as an aid to storing and refining composing, although most readily use ICT for research and presentation.

169. The attitudes of most pupils, which were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, are now very good. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations, and generally work hard and with obvious enjoyment. One or two pupils who have special educational needs, and have no support in music, are easily distracted and are often poor at listening.

170. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the previous inspection. In Years 7, 8 and 9 teaching is very good, and pupils learn very well. More able pupils and pupils with special educational needs alike make good progress. In Years 10-11 teaching and progress are good. Teaching is characterised by the very systematic approach to the development of pupils' intuitive musicianship. Teachers have a high level of expertise, are energetic and enthusiastic, and encourage pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem.

171. Lessons are very well planned to make good use of available time, and rarely miss any opportunity to challenge and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result of the imaginative use of keyboards and classroom percussion, pupils in Year 9 successfully used an Indian raga to create an atmosphere of tranquillity. Weaknesses occur when too much time is allocated to explanations or when the different needs of particular pupils are not recognised.

172. Since the previous inspection, opportunities for extra-curricular activities have increased greatly. Around sixty pupils take part in concerts. The junior choir sings simple three-part arrangements effectively, a recently established wind band is achieving creditable standards, and two steel bands perform regularly in the district. Around thirty pupils have instrumental lessons from a team of six visiting teachers. However, the take-up of these activities, although steadily increasing, is low for the size of the school.

173. Leadership in the department is excellent and is directly responsible for the outstanding improvement in the provision for music since the previous inspection. However, because the head of the department has insufficient time to carry out a number of departmental responsibilities, some aspects of management are not satisfactory: there are no opportunities for monitoring teaching; although pupils' work is regularly assessed outcomes are not analysed to inform curriculum planning

further; not enough time is allocated to professional development; resources for information technology are unsatisfactory; the quality of the accommodation has improved but there are still no practice rooms.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Good teaching in Years 7-9.
- The contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- Effective leadership and management of the subject.
- Improvement since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE, particularly in theory work.
- Higher attainers in examination classes are not fully challenged.
- Overall quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Better use could be made of the assessments of pupils' work in Years 7-9.

174. Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were well below average. However, all candidates successfully gained at least a G grade which is better than found in most schools. Few girls chose to take the subject and their results were not as good as those obtained by boys. Overall results improved slightly in 2001, largely because of the much-improved performance of girls, whose results were much better than those of boys. Pupils' results in physical education were generally stronger than in their other subjects in 2001.

175. Standards of work of pupils in Year 9 are broadly average. This represents good achievement in comparison with their starting points in Year 7. Pupils are taught in classes of similar attainment, and the majority, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress through Years 7-9. In Year 9, standards in badminton are average. Lower attainers' standards in hockey are below average but they work hard and make good progress when practising to improve their skills and apply tactics. Higher attainers have a good understanding of the components of fitness. They can measure pulse rate and record how quickly they recover after vigorous physical exercise. The majority of pupils readily talk to each other in planning how to improve their work. They know that it is important to prepare for exercise and many can suggest and lead warm up activities. In Year 8, boys who are higher attainers quickly devise ways of outwitting their opponents in adapted football games, and show good technique and accuracy in heading the ball.

176. Standards of work of the Year 11 pupils in physical education are average which represents satisfactory achievement. Girls reach average standards in hockey and most have a sound competence in basic stick work and team play. Pupils know the rules and can officiate with some confidence, but opportunities to do so are usually limited to those who are excused from full participation in the lesson. Boys reach average standards in basketball. They work very hard in practising and applying advanced tactics, for example, attacking overlapping areas of a zone defence. However, in general, pupils are not given enough opportunity to talk to each other about their work and rely too much on the teacher for direction. Pupils' capacity to devise and evaluate training programmes is underdeveloped because they are not given sufficient opportunity to do so. In Year 10 boys are developing sound tactical awareness in football.

177. No Year 11 examination lessons took place in that part of the week in which the inspection took place. Judgements on the standards of pupils' work in GCSE are based on an analysis of a small sample of pupils' work, assessment information provided by the department and evidence obtained from a planned discussion with a group of pupils. Overall, standards are below average. They are higher in practical activities than in the theoretical aspects of their course. Knowledge and understanding of the working of the human body is inconsistent. Lower attainers have difficulty in

writing convincing explanations of functions such as respiration. Higher attainers have a reasonable knowledge base but are not sufficiently extended. Girls in a Year 10 GCSE class worked very well with each other in a netball lesson, planning and evaluating tactics to be used from a centre or baseline throw. Their standards are above average.

178. The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 is good. It is satisfactory overall in Years 10-11. Teachers use their subject knowledge well in explanations and demonstrations, which ensures that pupils have a clear idea of what they need to do to learn new skills and tactics. They also use it well to question individual pupils and groups about their work, so that they know how to improve their performance. Learning activities are interesting and often make good use of competition in order to motivate pupils to work hard and improve. This was illustrated well in a successful Year 7 netball lesson in which the girls were challenged to discover different ways of passing the ball, and then competed against each other in practising to improve their accuracy. Similarly, in good lessons in Year 10 GCSE netball and Year 11 basketball, the pupils' enthusiasm for competition motivated them to work hard at the advanced tactics which they were applying, and contributed to the good progress which they made. Some classes are too large. This limits the teacher's capacity to provide individual attention, and so tends to restrict the overall progress made in the lesson. Although lesson planning is generally good, in Year 10 and 11 pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to discuss their work among themselves and so rely too much on their teachers. Pupils' written work in GCSE theory classes indicates that, while the extensive use of worksheets provides good support for lower attainers, it does not allow the higher attainers to be sufficiently stretched. Lessons contribute well to pupils' personal development because teachers insist on high standards of sportsmanship and fair play in lessons. Non-participants are well catered for with activities which allow them to continue to learn and contribute to lessons, for example, by officiating.

179. Participation rates in lessons are good. Pupils enjoy physical education and are prepared to work hard, even when not directly supervised by the teacher. Other than a small minority, most pupils are well-behaved in lessons. Many pupils naturally begin to prepare for physical activity before the lesson starts and, when playing games, spontaneously applaud each other's success.

180. Leadership and management are good. Issues raised at the previous inspection have been largely resolved and improvement since then is good. Curriculum planning and assessment procedures have been improved. Good use is being made of computers to store and handle assessment information. However, while this information is used very well in Year 10-11 examination classes, for example, to set challenging targets, it is not yet used as well in curriculum planning for other pupils.

181. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is popular with both boys and girls and adds to the overall standards achieved throughout the school. A reasonable level of success in team games, particularly hockey, is achieved at local and area level in competition against other schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Management and leadership of the subject are very good.
- The quality of the curriculum in Years 7-9 has recently improved.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7-9.
- Homework which is not sufficiently challenging.
- Amount of teaching time available for the subject.
- Provision for religious education in the sixth form.

182. In the GCSE examination in 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was below average, although almost all of the 89 pupils who took the short course in religious studies gained a pass grade. More girls than boys gained the higher grades. In 2001, the results were similar but represent good achievement given the difficulties arising from staff absence. The number of candidates has risen significantly since the time of the last report when very few pupils took the examination.

183. The standards reached in Year 9 are below average as pupils had no coherent scheme of work last year and very little written work was produced. However, in lessons and work samples seen during the inspection, achievement is satisfactory. This is because teachers are enthusiastic, lessons are well structured and most pupils have positive attitudes. Overall, standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are below average because of the staffing problems during the previous year. However, achievement is satisfactory now that there is a more consistent pattern of teaching. Most pupils use text books effectively to retrieve information, and they can give accurate examples of the different moral arguments put forward in supporting or opposing actions such as the termination of life. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, especially when they have classroom support.

184. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. They listen attentively and are eager to take part in discussions. However, a minority of pupils of all ages find difficulty in concentrating and their lack of cooperation can disrupt the lesson. Written work is generally neatly presented. The school recognised that pupils needed to make a fresh start this year and the new, good quality exercise books encourage pupils to take a pride in making their work look attractive. Handwriting is usually well formed and diagrams are clear and colourful. Many pupils are sensitive to the opportunities which the subject offers for personal development and their responses, particularly in written work, are thoughtful and honest. However, homework tasks lack challenge and are often left unfinished.

185. The overall quality of the teaching, and the learning that it promotes, is satisfactory. The major strengths lie in the effective teamwork, well structured lessons and the good rapport which teachers have established with pupils. Pupils achieve successfully as a result, because classroom routines run smoothly, the lesson moves forward purposefully and pupils enjoy the work they are doing. Effective introductions and summaries have a significant role in promoting achievement as pupils only have one lesson every two weeks. At the beginning of a good Year 7 lesson on rites of passage, pupils were eager to give examples of important episodes in their own lives. This information, recorded on the board, helped them to complete the first part of the written task quickly and easily. In the end of lesson summary, pupils of all levels of attainment were able to show that they had made good progress in understanding the significance of ceremonies marking the milestones of life. Similarly, a Year 10 lesson on belief in God was notable for the teacher's effective conclusion. All the threads of the discussion were skilfully drawn together so that pupils could reflect upon and evaluate the diversity of views which they had been exploring. However, pupils learn less successfully in those lessons where they do not have enough opportunities to take an active role in the lesson, and where the teacher is not sufficiently firm with pupils who misbehave.

186. Subject leadership and management are very good. The improvements in staffing, together with introduction of a comprehensive, coherent scheme of work for pupils in Years 7-9, are having a positive impact. Good procedures are now in place for the regular monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress. In order to improve further and to continue to raise standards, the range of teaching techniques and homework tasks need to be extended to enable pupils to become more independent learners. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The leadership of the head of department who has developed a highly organised and appropriate scheme of work.
- The consistently good quality of teaching to all classes, which each year results in some of the best GCSE examination results in the school.
- The sensible yet enthusiastic and motivated attitudes of most pupils to practical drama work.

187. Drama is taught to all pupils in Years 7-9, and is a popular and successful GCSE option. It enjoys high status in the school, pupils responding well to the good opportunities provided by practical work in good quality facilities, and the frequent school productions.

188. GCSE results in 2000, when almost a quarter of the year group took drama, were well above the national average. All candidates gained a pass grade, a quarter of them at grade A. This continued the trend of previous years and was maintained in the 2001 results.

189. Standards of work seen in lessons confirmed that pupils have above average drama skills by the end of Year 9, and likewise by the end of Year 11. This represents very good achievement in Years 7-9, and good achievement in Years 10-11. The achievement stems from the excellent organisation of the course, and the quality of drama teaching. Younger pupils quickly learn the value of cooperation, the need to be aware of and sensitive to others, and drama conventions such as the discussion circle. By Year 9, most are able to take a full part in planning and rehearsing performance, and are confident presenting to other groups. Whilst most pupils interpret a script with expression, some pupils of average and below average ability find difficulty in portraying character or atmosphere when reading a script. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because they are given the framework and confidence to take a full part, knowing that their contributions will be valued by teachers and pupils alike. At GCSE, most pupils are good at organising and evaluating their work, and are very aware of staging opportunities and difficulties. Relationships and cooperation are very good. Pupils who achieve less well remain over-reliant on their script, or are more concerned with technical accuracy rather than dramatic flavour. Levels of pupil absence affect the progress of some groups in practical work.

190. Pupils' attitudes in drama lessons are good. They show tolerance and teamwork; responsibility and respect. As a result, lessons are orderly and purposeful, most pupils quickly learning the need for care and self-discipline in practical work. Relationships are very good, allowing groups to function well, and not to be distracted by other groups nearby. A minority of GCSE pupils can be awkward and uncooperative if corrected about unhelpful attitudes, but teachers handle such situations well, and expectations of work and behaviour are consistently high.

191. Drama teaching is good overall, and it is sometimes very good. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the structure and direction of lessons, as well as the skills pupils need to use, are made clear. They explain these at the beginning of lessons and review them at the end. This helps pupils to understand fully their own part in learning, and ensures that their learning is good. A Year 9 class willingly accepted an additional, unscheduled homework because they could see that working at home was the best way to prepare for the next stage in the unit of work. Enthusiastic teaching, which combines good subject knowledge with a very good understanding of pupils and how various groups best learn, is a feature of the drama department.

192. The department benefits from strong leadership, high quality organisation, and very capable and committed teaching. Good use is made of the curriculum time, and the philosophy and practice of the department is a significant factor in the personal development of pupils. Pupils in a Year 7 class showed care and sensitivity when 'sculpting' each other into objects, and listened spellbound as the teacher conjured up the magic of the circus to inspire their efforts to create their own troupe names and acts. The very good standards observed in drama during the previous inspection are still evident.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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
Biology	3	33	53	-	6	0.3	0.9
Computer studies	1	100	72	-	13	1.0	1.7
French	1	100	78	-	17	1.0	1.8
Mathematics	3	67	63	-	17	1.0	1.6
Other social studies	1	100	70	-	18	2.0	1.7

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
Art and design	12	100	96	8	45	5.3	6.4
Biology	5	80	88	20	34	3.6	5.3
Chemistry	6	50	89	-	42	1.7	5.8
Communication studies	10	90	93	20	30	4.2	5.4
English language	9	89	90	22	29	4.9	5.2
English literature	5	100	96	-	36	4.0	5.9
French	6	50	91	17	39	2.7	5.7
General studies	3	67	85	-	28	3.3	4.8
Geography	7	100	92	71	37	7.4	5.7
German	2	-	92	-	41	-	5.9
History	5	80	89	20	34	2.8	5.4
Mathematics	9	100	89	22	45	5.8	5.9
Other social studies	10	40	88	-	35	1.0	5.3
Physics	9	89	88	22	41	4.7	5.7

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Post 16 VQ Art and design	3	3	n/a	2	n/a	12.0	12.66
Post 16 VQ Business	4	4	n/a	1	n/a	6.0	10.78
Post 16 VQ Health and social care	1	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	10.69

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a thorough command of the subject.
- Relationships between students and teachers are generally positive, particularly in Year 13.

Areas for improvement

- Develop assessment procedures so that there is an identifiable connection between regular assessments and the system of grades used in AS and A2 examinations.
- Measure progress against short-term individual targets that are shared with the students.
- Ensure that ICT is used to enrich and support learning.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation promotes consistency of provision, particularly in the sharing of good practice.

193. Standards of attainment in A-level examinations are broadly in line with national averages. In 1998 and 1999 results were above the national average and in 2000 at the national average. In these three years every student achieved an advanced level pass grade. In 1998 and 1999 combined, ten out of nineteen students gained either a grade A or a grade B which was well above the national average. In the 2000 examinations one candidate achieved a grade A and one a grade B, which was below the national average; the overall average points score was close to the national average. The 2001 results, for which national comparison figures are not yet available, are lower than previous years because two candidates failed to obtain a grade at A-level. In the last four years a total of 29 male and 9 female students sat A-level mathematics, and all but two students achieved a pass grade. An analysis of the 2000 examination grades show that one in three students obtained grades higher than indicated by their prior level of attainment, one in three in line with their prior level of attainment and one in three below their prior level of attainment. Overall, therefore, their level of achievement was satisfactory.

194. The standard of work seen in lessons and students' written work is at the national average. Some reflects the standards required for students to attain above average grades. The achievement of the majority of students is at a satisfactory level and at least matches their prior attainment, which in Year 13 is predominantly GCSE grade B. There is systematic progression in both depth and difficulty. The quality of students' notes varies and there is a lack of structured explanations to support revision. For example, few students annotate their notes to suit their individual learning needs. The clarity of diagrams, particularly in mechanics, is good and promotes understanding. Most students are at ease with the statistics and mechanics sections of the course and many experience greatest problems with pure mathematics. This is largely because of weaknesses with basic algebraic skills. The quality of solutions ranges from good to an inadequate level of rigour, but is mainly at the expected standard. Marking and assessment of students' work varies in both frequency and detail. In the best instances, there is detailed analysis and correction of inaccuracies, with supporting comments. There are, however, inconsistencies in the system of grading students' work. The connection with how well a student is performing in relation to A-level grades is not always clear. Although the assessment of work lacks detail and formality, it is evident that most students make satisfactory progress over time. There are no female students in Year 13, but in Year 12 there is no difference in the performance of male and female students. The use of ICT was not evident in lessons or in students' prior work.

195. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and some is good. Two particular strengths characterise most lessons, the subject command of the teachers and the good relationships that have been established

between teachers and students, particularly in Year 13. The combination of these two factors and the positive attitude to study of most students ensure that learning is satisfactory, and that lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace and systematically build on prior learning. For example, in introductory work on the Poisson distribution, the teacher skilfully summarised all the essential prior knowledge and skills required so that students enjoyed success with the new topic. Although a few Year 12 students occasionally require teacher intervention to be kept on task, the majority consistently apply themselves to their work with a good level of sustained concentration. In the best lessons the teacher's enthusiasm for mathematics is transmitted to the students. Their command of subject enables them to formulate questions that promote learning with understanding, and they use any incorrect student responses to skilfully isolate misconceptions. For example, when working with increasingly challenging questions on inverse functions, the teacher was able to separate the new work from weaknesses in the students' capacity to simplify algebraic fractions. The teacher illuminated understanding of the new work and isolated and corrected the weaknesses in basic manipulative skills in algebra. In less successful lessons the teachers do not involve the students in their learning and provide the answers to their own questions. In such lessons the students are passive and there is an absence of enthusiasm for the subject. The opportunity is missed to share understanding by building on student responses and the teacher has then to replicate explanations on an individual basis.

196. There is a good match of teachers to the requirements of the various modules in the A-level mathematics courses. They share a commitment to do the best for the students and improve results but they do not formally share the good practice that clearly exists. The subject is well managed, but there is inadequate monitoring of performance.

SCIENCES

The focus was on physics, but both biology and chemistry lessons were sampled. In biology, examination results are below average but improving. Three lessons were observed, two were satisfactory and one very good. In this last lesson a complicated topic was explained very well. Students are well motivated and have good attitudes; they are keen to succeed. In chemistry, examination results from the very small entry are below average and are not as good as those in physics or biology. Two lessons were observed. Teaching overall was satisfactory, although progress in one lesson was restricted due to the group containing students from Years 12 and 13 studying different aspects. In the other lesson, good teaching enabled the only student to gain a sound understanding of various salt hydrolysis reactions.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Standards being achieved by the current students in the classroom are higher than previous examination results.
- Overall, teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised around clear and appropriate learning objectives.
- The department is improving. It is well led and there are clear policies and procedures for securing further improvement.
- Regular and frequent assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress leading to target setting is improving standards.
- Students' good mathematical skills are well used to improve understanding.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to enhance and extend learning.
- Consistency of teaching quality. Occasionally the pace of work is too slow, work is pitched too low and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged.
- Opportunities for independent learning in the school.

197. The A-level examination results over the years 1998-2000 have been consistent in that they have always been close to or slightly below the national average. In Year 2000, 9 boys took the examination; all but one gained a pass grade and two gained A or B grades. Students taking physics usually obtain slightly better grades than they do in their other subjects and when their GCSE grades are taken into consideration they do a little better than expected. In 2001 only four boys took the examination and three of them obtained a pass grade. The entry is too small for meaningful comparisons, but the results are broadly as expected considering the students' GCSE grades. Nine Year 12 students took the AS-level examination in 2001; all obtained a pass grade and achieved grades broadly in line with expectation.

198. Standards of work of current students are average although a number of Year 13 students are well on track to obtain the higher grades at A-level. Effective teaching is enabling students to make good progress and they are achieving well in relation to their GCSE grades. An important factor in keeping the students on course to achieve their target grade is the frequent monitoring of their work which lets students know how well they are doing, and what they have to do to improve. Year 13 students use their good mathematical skills to solve problems, for example, they were able to calculate the speed of electrons in a current carrying conductor. Their work on wave theory, including interference, diffraction and the Doppler effect was also of a good standard. Investigative skills are of a satisfactory standard. In one of the observed lessons, students were able to calculate the acceleration due to gravity by several methods, although some students had forgotten earlier work and had difficulty in justifying some of the necessary assumptions.

199. Year 12 students, who have only just started their AS-level course, are building on their GCSE work and achieving as expected from their grades. In one lesson students reinforced earlier work on resistors, and developed their mathematical skills by performing various calculations on circuits using resistors in parallel. Checking their calculations practically by using a multi-meter increased students' motivation. In the other lesson observed, students were successfully able to apply their knowledge of moments and the resolution of forces to a practical situation.

200. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this is the most significant factor in enabling the students to make good progress. They experience an appropriate range of activities which contains a good balance between practical work and theory. Lessons are well planned and organised around clear and appropriate learning aims. Teachers are enthusiastic, give much personal attention to individual students, who respond well, and establish a good working environment. Occasionally the pace of work is too slow, work is pitched too low and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. When this occurs there is often insufficient time to capture students' attention and imagination by making the topic more relevant or by performing a spectacular demonstration to illustrate the potential of the subject.

201. Students learn well. They are attentive and respond well to the teachers' prompting. However, they are not confident in asking questions which would extend their learning further. They show particular interest in practical work where they collaborate well with others and share their ideas and findings. They complete homework conscientiously but there are very limited opportunities on-site for independent learning. The potential of ICT to enhance and extend learning is not being exploited. This situation is not helped by a shortage of resources. Students only rarely use the internet to research information. There is little evidence that ICT equipment is used to measure and control external conditions, such as temperature, or to use programs to simulate investigations which cannot be created in the laboratory such as the motion of satellites.

202. Changes in the curriculum have had a positive effect. Regular and frequent assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress leading to target setting are strong features. The monitoring of classroom provision is also having a positive effect although this has not yet achieved a consistency of teaching quality. These changes are improving students' learning, but as many of them are recent they have not had time to have impact on examination results. Standards being achieved by the current students in the classroom are higher than the examination results achieved by former students.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was sampled. The first students from the school took the AS and A-level examinations in 2001 achieving below average results. Two lessons were observed, one was satisfactory and the other good. Students' coursework builds satisfactorily on the approach established in their GCSE course, but needs to be more rigorous in its application. More attention should be given to ensuring that students are able to give well-structured answers to questions on the written examination papers.

BUSINESS

The focus during the inspection was on the single award AVCE and double award AVCE in business in both Years 12 and 13. The intermediate GNVQ course was also sampled, where recent results have been average. One lesson was observed and the teaching was good, and effective use was made of ICT.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers are well qualified in GNVQ methods.
- Well prepared, vocational materials.
- Good use of ICT.
- Students are well focused and have clear career objectives.
- A well organised curriculum based on the GNVQ specifications.

Areas for improvement

- Pace of work is too slow at both intermediate and advanced levels.
- Written work in folders is often incomplete or inadequate.
- Students need to improve standards of literacy.
- Teaching methods rely too much on computers. More classroom work and group work is needed.

203. Results in the GNVQ in business studies in 2000 were average at advanced level, but were above average at intermediate level, with no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls. The drop-out rate was high, explained by students seeking employment during the course. In 2001, the advanced GNVQ results were similar to the previous years, although numbers were very small.

204. In the current Year 13, the AVCE students are achieving well. Progress is good, given their previous GCSE results. Students show good learning skills as a result of good teaching and good facilities for ICT. Students can use computers well in responding to case studies and can use spreadsheets and graphs effectively. This is the result of constant practice in the computer suites and extra provision in workshops to qualify them, in addition, for the key skills awards at level three. Their pace of work could be improved, however, and there is insufficient written material in their folders. Students are well disposed to the subject and see its relevance and purpose, as for example in one lesson featuring the ways in which new businesses raise capital. Students then used graphical projection methods to predict long term results. Many view the course as a secondary qualification to their main subjects, and as a useful back up to their main career intention.

205. In Year 12, current students are achieving at above average levels at intermediate level, as seen in the work completed. Most begin the course with sound GCSE results, many just short of the requirements for the advanced level. They view the intermediate course as a transitional year and most are taking other GNVQ intermediate or advanced subsidiary courses, and are re-sitting GCSEs. Results are good because of positive student attitudes, well focussed teaching and because key skills are mandatory at this level of GNVQ. Although their use of ICT is good, assisting them to interpret

graphs and statistics, written work is often inadequate and incomplete. Drop-out from the intermediate course is high, up to one third each year, but this is inherent in a programme where moving to employment is a course aim, and in which job seeking in the vocational area is part of the curriculum. Almost all students questioned have substantial part-time jobs, and are often actively seeking full-time work.

206. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good. Teachers are well qualified, many of them as GNVQ assessors. They constantly use new technology, including Powerpoint projection methods, use good up-to-date textbooks well, and use good questioning in their presentations. At times computers are a distraction when making theoretical inputs, and a better balance is needed in the timetable to give more classroom sessions, particularly to develop more group work. Work is assessed carefully, but teachers need to challenge students more to increase their work rate, their speed of completion and to write more extensively.

207. Students have good attitudes to business studies. They enjoy it because it relates to their own jobs and their daily lives. When questioned, they often found that they could see examples in their part time work of management styles and varied aspects of health and safety. For those working in family businesses, the use of spreadsheets was valuable. Business studies makes a valuable contribution to students' awareness of social and moral issues such as global resources and the activities of businesses in the third world. It also prepares students for work by its vocational focus and work experience.

208. The subject relies heavily on the use of computers and students spend almost all of their time in computer suites, raising their skill levels. They are able to meet the requirements for good standards in numeracy and communication, both of which are built into many assignments. Students prepare presentations as a result of their enquiries, and in some cases, make these outside the school, as part of the Young Enterprise scheme.

209. The subject is well organised within the overall GNVQ framework for the school. It has a clearly set-out scheme of work, made clear to students in their induction pack. Learning resources and computers have improved since the previous inspection and the subject is well positioned to make a distinctive contribution to a vocational sixth form.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was in information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 12, and computing in Year 13, which are combined in the following report.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Introduction of an examination which is appropriate to students' needs.
- A clear strategy for future development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards of weaker students.
- Ensure a better match of students' prior ICT experience to the demands of the course.
- Improve pupils' ability to select appropriate applications in project work.
- Achieve a more consistent quality of teaching.
- Improve students' access to computers for independent work.

210. A and AS level examinations in this subject have only recently been introduced in the school. One student took the A-level examination in computing in 2000 and there were five entries in 2001. One of these six students achieved an A grade but the others were awarded grade E or below. There

were twelve entries for the AS examination in 2001 of which half were unclassified. The results of the others were broadly average. When compared to their prior attainment in both ICT and their other subjects those students who were graded achieved well. Those who were unclassified mostly started the course with low prior attainment. However, results overall have been below average.

211. The standards of work of the three students in the current Year 13 who are studying for an A-level examination in computing are average at present, and are showing signs of improving. They have a sound understanding of the technical aspects of the course, such as the use of different data structures. The teacher's clear explanations and illustrations of, for example, binary trees, queuing and stacking ensure that they understand concepts before being set to work independently. They are well advanced with their projects so that they can devote time to testing and refining their programs. They have a sound understanding of the security needs involved in their projects. The two students seen during the inspection (one was absent) were both achieving satisfactorily compared with their attainment in Year 12.

212. Students in Year 12 have only just started their course leading to an AS level examination in information and communication technology. This has replaced the computing examination in the school because most students choosing to study ICT at AS/A level did not have a sufficiently technical background for the computing course. Even for this AS level course, which has no prerequisites, the lack of ICT experience since students took a key skills course in Year 10 means that students start at a low level. Consequently, work seen during the inspection was below average both in terms of students' understanding of applications and their appropriate use, and their overall understanding of computing. Most students are satisfactorily acquiring skills in using software, such as using MS PowerPoint to make a presentation to the group, but most also need an introduction to some basic aspects of ICT, such as terminology, before they can work independently.

213. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and some is very good. The strengths of the teaching are in the individual help given to pupils and the very good illustration of technical points in some lessons. However, in other lessons insufficient account is taken of the low starting point of many of the pupils. For example, in one lesson the teacher did not supplement the textbook sufficiently to ensure pupils' understanding before they made notes from reading the text. Although pupils are now receiving clear advice and written comments on the progress of their work, this has not been the case in previous years.

214. The students in Year 13 work hard and are keen to succeed. They work well independently and carry out much of the development work for their projects on their home computers. Year 12 students lack confidence; for example, although they had prepared PowerPoint presentations, no student was prepared to lead the rest of the group through the prepared presentation, although they did comment from within the security of the group. This is a further indication of the problems of their limited prior attainment. It is necessary to ensure that pupils are fully aware of the demands of the course and that they receive advice as to their suitability for it. It is also necessary to start the course with an introduction, as the examinations board suggests, for pupils without a GCSE in the subject.

215. Two new suites of computers have just been installed, but there is still inadequate access for students to continue their work outside lessons. New leadership for the subject has been appointed and, although very recent, the decisions already taken are appropriate, for example the change to a more appropriate AS/A level course. The work of the subject has been monitored in order to introduce improvements and changes in the teaching of ICT in the main school are well thought out to raise standards ultimately in the sixth form. Hence, the current provision is satisfactory and set to improve

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus in the inspection was on physical education but travel and tourism was also sampled. Travel and tourism was introduced into the Year 12 curriculum this year and five students have chosen to follow the course. One lesson was observed and the teaching was good. A skilfully led discussion enabled the students to apply their knowledge and understanding of different types of customers to relevant case studies. In 2001, six students successfully passed GNVQ Intermediate leisure and tourism, and one has since progressed onto the new course.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Numbers of students choosing to study physical education are increasing.
- Classroom relationships are good.
- Year 12 students' work is well marked.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The timetable for physical education.
- Teachers' experience of the demands of the A/AS level work.
- Resources and accommodation for theory lessons.
- Staffing levels.
- Opportunities for recreational sport for the sixth form.

216. Physical education has only recently been introduced into the sixth form as an examination subject and, as yet, no students have been entered for the A-level. In 2000, one student was entered for AS-level and gained an E grade. In 2001, none of the seven students who were entered for the AS-level examination obtained a grade higher than a D, and one student failed the examination. Nevertheless, when compared with their starting points, for most students this represented a satisfactory achievement and some achieved well. Numbers of students who are choosing to follow advanced level courses in physical education are increasing.

217. Inspection evidence shows that the students currently in Year 13 produce work which is below average standard. Students are not always well prepared for lessons. Some lack confidence when discussing their work, particularly that concerned with scientific principles of exercise and performance, where standards are lower than in other aspects of their course. Confidence is higher when students are able to make use of their own experiences, for example, when discussing learning theories, and this helps their understanding. However, they still rely on the teacher for support when taking notes in lessons. Nevertheless, in comparison with their modest starting points, their achievements are satisfactory. Students currently in Year 12 have previously reached at least average standards in those GCSE subjects which underpin learning at advanced level in physical education. This is reflected in the quality of the work already produced, for example, the technical vocabulary associated with exercise and training is well understood. They are beginning to prepare well for lessons, and can work well independently, for example, by using computers to research information on the history of sport, which then informs the class discussion. The inspection evidence indicates that they are reaching average standards, representing satisfactory achievement for these students.

218. Overall, the teaching of AS and A-level physical education is satisfactory. Teachers work hard to prepare their lessons and have established good relationships with their students. This is an important factor in A-level classes where students find the work particularly demanding. The pace of learning is generally well suited to students' capabilities and the climate in lessons is supportive and encouraging. Teachers have sound subject knowledge but lack experience in teaching at this level. Those least experienced rely heavily on their notes which sometimes inhibits spontaneity. Opportunities to provide real intellectual challenge are also sometimes missed. Year 12 students' work is well marked, already providing a clear indication of the standards reached, and showing them how to improve their work.

219. The department is well led and managed. There is a shared concern to improve standards and the quality of teaching. However, since the beginning of this academic year, there are not enough teachers to meet all the demands of the timetable for physical education in the sixth form. Consequently, in a small proportion of lessons, students are expected to work by themselves and are not taught directly. This is unsatisfactory. Students who follow the Community Sports Leader Award course are also affected and teachers have had to arrange for some activities to take place outside normal lesson times. Despite this, the small number of students who follow the CSLA course are

generally meeting course expectations. There are shortages of quality textbooks for students and the lack of a settled base for classroom teaching restricts learning opportunities. There is no provision in the sixth form timetable for recreational sport, which was also the case at the time of the previous inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This subject was not sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design, but media studies and theatre studies were also sampled.

One lesson in media studies was observed. No examination results are available for 2000; in 2001 all six students entered gained a pass, with half obtaining grade B. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and students are able to understand the applications of a range of different devices used in video recording to create effect and provoke thought in the viewer. For example, they were able to suggest "sinister effect" as well as the historical correctness in the use of black and white footage in a film about the Munich hostages crisis.

In 2000 the A-level examination results in theatre studies were slightly lower than those of the previous year when all six candidates gained grades A*-C. However, the seven students who took the examination all gained pass grades. One Year 13 lesson was observed which was satisfactory. In the absence of the regular teacher, it was taken by a newly qualified drama specialist already working in the school. Her knowledgeable commentary on Brechtian ideas about acting enabled students to build effectively upon the firm foundation of drama which they had gained in earlier years. However, there were not enough opportunities for students to take an active part in the lesson through reading aloud and extended discussion.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good: learning is well supported by a high level of teacher knowledge, advice and evaluation of work.
- The AVCE course is a very well designed programme, which effectively helps students to build on their knowledge and understanding.
- The department offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which are significant factors in raising achievement.
- The department has a good level of expertise in ICT and it is used effectively to support and extend learning.

Areas for improvement

- The number of students gaining higher grades at A-level.
- Make improved use of assessment to plan the curriculum at AS and A-level.
- The accommodation and environment of the art department.
- The analysis of predicted grades for students' performance in AS and A-level examinations requires more accuracy.

220. The A-level results in 2000 were below average for grades A-B but were slightly above average for grades A-E. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade. Three students with modest grades at GCSE did well. The achievement of the higher ability students was less satisfactory. Very few students did not complete the course. Two students took GNVQ Advanced and both gained distinctions. In 2001 the entry for A-level fell to three students. All students passed and one gained a grade B. At AS level, 31 per cent of pupils gained the higher grades and 81 per cent gained grades A-E. Overall achievement was satisfactory. The achievement of three pupils who had not taken art before was good.

221. The standards of work of current A-level students are overall in line with the national average. The range of ability is wide with a number working at a high level. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their ability based on their GCSE results. A number of students are also following the AVCE double award, which is supporting and raising standards. Students work with a sound degree of individuality and many show in-depth analysis and exploration of ideas and styles. Studies based on portraits, where pupils researched such areas as the elongation of form in the work of Modigliani, resulted in large-scale work which reflected a sound level of conceptual and personal response. The work of higher attaining students demonstrates a critical analysis of images and texts but this was less evident across all abilities. Achievement was good where students had attended a print workshop with an artist in residence and produced collagraph prints inspired by the work of Escher. Students following the AVCE course showed a good understanding of how to develop and use visual language. They produced a wide range of responses at an above average standard, ranging from large wall hangings based on the work of Matisse to detailed relief sculptures of tigers.

222. Students in Year 12 following the AS level are only a little way into their course, but are achieving much as expected. In the lessons observed, students demonstrated a growing ability to interpret and convey ideas and to use experimental, analytical and documenting skills. In a project on Flora and Fauna, students showed originality through a range of research including experiments with a wide range of media. In the AVCE lessons, students' work reflected a growing understanding of the use of exploratory work and produced research in a wide range of media using images of pattern and artefacts from various cultures.

223. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. In the best lesson the teaching included very good planning with well-structured sequences of activities, building on independent learning. The high quality of individual attention and knowledgeable advice plays an important role in raising standards. Students are treated as individual artists and well supported when working on their own projects. For example, in an AVCE lesson a teacher gave very good advice on textile techniques and challenged pupils by pertinent questioning to identify areas that were to be researched next. Discussion is a regular feature of all lessons, through which students extend their ideas and develop their understanding. In A-level classes, teachers record the results of individual tutorials and analysis of work, which gives students clear guidance on what routes can be followed to improve their work. Good systems of assessment are in place with personal target setting and an emphasis on students taking responsibility for their learning. Teachers have a good relationship with students and put a strong emphasis on praise and encouragement; however, this at times leads to the predicted grades for students being unrealistically high in the AS and A-level courses.

224. Students learn well. They have a very positive attitude to work, enjoy art and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles that they experience. Most can work independently and pursue lines of development in long-term project work. Students work hard in the lessons. The sketchbooks of higher attainers reflect a high level of personal commitment with visits to galleries and places of interest pursued in their own time. This was less evident across all abilities. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject encourages students to be receptive to new ideas and fresh viewpoints, and students display a willingness to consider views and beliefs other than their own.

225. The independent work students undertake is well prepared and tasks complement the content of the lessons well. The department uses ICT very effectively. The staff have produced very good quality resources, such as CD-Roms on African Art, which further support the students' use of research to build on and extend project work. Exemplars of previous exhibitions of examination work are available which give the students clear awareness of the standards expected for high grades. Books and artefacts linked to themes being studied act as a stimulus and support to learning.

226. The department is well led and managed, and the good teaching and learning are a direct result of this. Documentation gives good guidance to staff. It details structured and progressive schemes of work, assessment and monitoring procedures, all of which are implemented. However, formal assessment systems are currently under-used to inform the planning of the curriculum at AS and A-level. The department contributes well to students' spiritual, moral and cultural development through class projects, multi-cultural study and autobiographical studies. The provision for extra-curricular

activities is very good; students attend residential weekends, visit art galleries in Britain and abroad, and work with local artists. Teachers work hard to create and maintain a stimulating environment within the department, but the accommodation is in poor repair.

HUMANITIES

Within this cluster of subjects the inspection focused on geography and history. Psychology was also sampled, where the examination results were very low in 2000. In 2001, results improved significantly. All five students passed, including three at grade B. One lesson was observed and the teaching was good. The lesson was carefully planned, and a good exposition ensured that the students acquired new knowledge of three models of memory. Their learning will be more secure when textbooks become available.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards on the A2 course are above average and the students achieve well.
- Teaching is good; teachers have good knowledge of the subject and lessons are carefully planned to promote learning.
- Fieldwork is of a high standard.
- The subject is very well led and the progress of students is closely monitored.

Areas for improvement

- The response and learning of students on the AS course.
- More opportunities for the students to develop their key skills.

227. The geography department does very well for its students. In 2000 the A-level results were well above the national average. Of the seven students, five gained B grades and two C grades. This represents good achievement given the standards of the students when they began the course. In the most recent A-level examination in 2001, the pass rate was again 100 per cent, although the proportion of students gaining A and B grades declined. Overall, the results indicate good achievement. In the new AS examinations during Year 12, the results were disappointing for the five students who completed the geography course at the end of the year. Only one successfully completed the three modules and obtained a grade D. The results of the five students continuing their studies to A2 level this year are much better and they are achieving well. The completion rates for all courses over the last three years have been high.

228. The observation of students in lessons, including discussions and an analysis of samples of their work, confirm that the standards on the A2 course are above average. In relation to their average levels of GCSE attainment these standards represent good achievement. In Year 13, students show a good knowledge and understanding of topics in both physical and human geography. In a module of work on population dynamics they have a clear grasp of the influence of natural increase, migration and economic development on age structure. They apply their understanding to case studies of cities and countries. In work on the El Nino, students explain its physical, social, economic and political impact on a local, national and international scale. They are less sure of its cause.

229. Standards on the AS course are below average, but represent satisfactory achievement for these students given their below average levels of GCSE attainment. In Year 12, students have a limited knowledge and understanding of the circulation of the earth's atmosphere. Most had not completed their preparation for a lesson introducing the tropical monsoon climate. As a consequence, the teacher had to spend much of the time reinforcing what the students should have learnt at home. Few responded well to her explanation and questions because of their lack of commitment, and their learning was insecure.

230. Overall, teaching is good. During the inspection it was at least good in three-quarters of lessons and satisfactory in the rest. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons well to give structure to students' learning. They have high expectations, challenge students appropriately, and their marking judges quality accurately and informs students how to improve their work. Where teaching was good or better, very good resources were used to develop students' skills, for example, in interpreting satellite photographs to identify mineral resources. This learning was extended in a good discussion to an understanding of the exploitation and extraction of the world's limited raw materials. In a satisfactory lesson on emergent and submergent coastlines there was too much teacher input and no opportunity for the students to apply their learning to case studies using maps and photographs.

231. Students in Year 13 learn well. They are interested and talk enthusiastically about their work. In fieldwork of high quality, they research independently to investigate ideas by collecting, presenting and analysing data. They make valid conclusions and understand the limitations of their findings. For example, in a study of plant succession across sand dunes, a student recognised that whilst a dune blow-out was part of the normal processes, one was affecting her results. By eliminating this, she improved her statistical correlation of increasing numbers of plant species and density with distance from the shore. At this early stage in their course students in Year 12 are not responding well in lessons and to homework. They lack self-confidence, interest and enthusiasm for the subject.

232. The main contribution to key skills in geography is in fieldwork. These enable the students to reach level 3 in each of the three skills of communication, application of number, and ICT. However, opportunities elsewhere are missed.

233. The subject is led and managed very well. A-level results have improved. The new courses have been thoroughly planned and effectively introduced. These courses are supported with a very good textbook and other learning resources. Planning and resources contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and learning. Target setting for students is in place and their progress is monitored and reviewed regularly. There is a commitment to build on students' previous knowledge, understanding and skills and an expectation to improve standards and results.

History

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

Strengths

- Good examples of numeracy and communication in key skills.
- Initiatives in staff development to update the subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory standards in Year 12.
- Need for more opportunities for students to undertake their own research, including use of the internet.
- Students need to be challenged to increase their work output, and to develop their independent learning.

234. Results in the A-level examinations in 2000 were well below the national average. Four students out of five entered gained a pass grade, with one at grade B, and three at grade E. In 2001 results improved with five out of six students successfully completing the course, including two at the higher A-B grades.

235. The standards of work of the current students in Year 13 are slightly above average. Their progress is satisfactory, given their results in the AS examinations in Year 12 were below average. They are able to analyse documents when they are given a strong lead by the teacher, but have not yet acquired enough confidence to work independently. In analysing radical movements in Britain between 1812 and 1827, they relied heavily on the teacher's notes and the more able students, although the class as a whole could understand the main strands of the argument. Students undertake insufficient personal research, including using the internet to expand their capacity for self study. The

students expressed determination to develop better essay writing skills and examination technique. Work seen so far indicates a successful result, if the standards seen can be continued into the examinations in 2002.

236. The standards of work of the current Year 12 students are below average. Several of them have very low GCSE grades and are not well prepared for sixth form study. More able students are beginning to understand basic concepts, but have not yet bridged the gap needed for higher levels of enquiry and analysis. In a lesson on the Weimar Republic, students were unable to grasp the main points because they lacked sufficient background information. To counter their weakness, students need to build up a basic understanding of content, linked to guidance in methods of answering examination questions. The students are enthusiastic and enjoy the subject, qualities that need to be channelled into effective study techniques.

237. Teaching is satisfactory overall. All teachers are subject specialists and have recently undertaken good staff development to update knowledge. Lesson preparation is restricted by a lack of up-to-date resources, and teachers have to rely too much on old textbooks, lacking additional funding to prepare for the new examination specifications. Teachers do not challenge students to be more critically aware and extend their independent research; a higher rate of work output is required. In the Year 12 class, the wide ability range presented the teacher with considerable challenge in providing individual help and guidance. Teachers need to ensure that enough work is completed, and that assessment procedures include guidance on how work can be improved.

238. Students are mostly keen to succeed and have made a choice based on interest in the subject. Many are aware of their limitations in study skills and examination technique, and are interested in achieving a basic grade. Some students are, however, immature. Their reading outside the subject is limited and their cultural experience is not extensive.

239. The subject's contribution to students' key skills is satisfactory. Some of the students' work is assessed against the criteria for communication, helping to improve their spelling, grammar and paragraph formation. They use tables of statistics extensively in charting the changes in numbers voting for each party in the Weimar Republic. However, there is limited evidence of use of the internet for research.

240. The department now has stable leadership after a long period of disruption, and management in the sixth form is satisfactory. Curriculum organisation, assessment and resourcing are being carried out more effectively now, and a start has been made with staff development aimed at refreshing and updating their knowledge. There is capacity to improve and a determination to raise standards.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English, but French and German were also sampled. In 2000 only half of the six candidates obtained a pass grade at A-level French; neither student taking German was successful. In 2001, all three students taking French passed; there were no candidates for German. Two lessons, one in each language, were observed. Teaching is at least satisfactory. Students' learning, as observed in their discussion about moral and social issues related to marriage, is also satisfactory.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Introduce more pace and greater challenge into teaching styles
- Encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning.

241. A-level results in English language and English literature in 2000 were average, reflecting a pattern that has been constant over the previous two years and similar to the situation at the time of the previous inspection. All students entered gained a pass grade. In neither examination did any student obtain the highest grade although two students gained B grades in English language. Results in English language in 2001 were similar to previous years but those in English literature showed a marked improvement with two grade A passes and one grade B.

242. English language is the only course currently running; groups are small.

243. Standards of work seen are average. Students in Year 12, who have only recently begun the course, understand the concepts underlying language structure; they recognise that fashion and conventions influence changes in the use of language. They understood the principles of the phonetic alphabet in representing homophonic sounds. However, their grasp of the fundamental functions of parts of speech, whether in isolated examples or in context, is unsatisfactory. Many were confused when attempting to define "noun" or "verb" and had little understanding of compound verbs.

244. Students in Year 13 understand the diversity of language development, from the early stages of children's development of written language to the influences of world-wide communication. They know that economic, commercial and social practices are reflected in the language conventions of particular historical periods. The written work by students of higher ability reveals good critical and analytical skills. In their personal writing these students successfully sustain the style appropriate to a specific genre. Students employ an appropriately wide, varied vocabulary, but are not always clear about the meanings or correct spellings of some more sophisticated expressions. Their research skills are systematic, and they effectively draw inferences from information they have collated. All students are making at least satisfactory progress, and those who have come into the course with the minimum GCSE entry grade are making good progress.

245. Teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory. Teaching has a number of good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They know their students' capabilities well and encourage them to fulfil their potential. Although in most lessons there are effective teaching strategies, not all lessons have sufficient pace and variety, or sufficiently high expectations. Much teaching is driven by the narrow focus of fulfilling examination requirements, with the result that learning is functional rather than stimulating.

246. Students' work is regularly marked and graded against examination criteria, and students clearly know how much progress they are making. Although marking includes some comment, there are few examples of helpful suggestions for further improvement. However, because groups are small, teachers have time to advise students on a one-to-one basis.

247. Students' levels of commitment to their studies is variable. In Year 13 all students are conscientious and most participate well in class, although there is little obvious enthusiasm and at times some are very reticent. Because groups are small some students are inhibited and are reluctant to express opinions and share ideas. Some students in Year 12 have yet to commit themselves to their studies and displayed some immaturity in their attitudes in class, wasting valuable time.

248. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection standards of attainment have been maintained. The curriculum fulfils the requirements of the examination syllabus and students' different needs are catered for. The general provision of resources for learning is barely satisfactory. Photo-copied material which forms a significant part of sources of information is dull. There is no information technology within the sixth form building, and no area for private study. The accommodation is drab and does not create an environment which is conducive to study and research.