

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SHIRE OAK SCHOOL**

Walsall Wood, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104260

Headteacher: Mrs C M Bryan

Reporting inspector: Mr Rod Spinks  
2783

Dates of inspection: 17 – 21 September 2001

Inspection number: 189205

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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lichfield Road  
Walsall Wood  
Walsall  
West Midlands

Postcode: WS9 9PA

Telephone number: 01543 452518

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Gamble

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2783	Rod Spinks	Registered inspector	Mathematics (post 16)	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11072	Shirley Elomari	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4992	Chris Richards	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20119	Tony Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4028	Leslie Booth	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
10874	Jeremy Seymour	Team inspector	Science	
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business education (post 16)	
4877	Stuart Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	

Team members		Subject	Aspect responsibilities
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			<b>responsibilities</b>	
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15280	Derek Kennard	Team inspector	Geography	
18681	David Thompson	Team inspector	History	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4525	Bob Lambert	Team inspector	Physical education	
2012	John Prangnell	Team inspector	Religious education Sociology (post 16)	
22823	Joy Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
31637	Keith Havercroft	Team inspector	Music	
3549	David Oakley	Team inspector	Biology (post 16)	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Shire Oak School is a larger than average foundation secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. There are 1301 pupils on roll including 142 students in the Sixth Form. The school has grown significantly since the last inspection and the number of pupils taking GCSE examinations in 2001 was twice the number in 2000. Just over 13% of pupils are listed on the school's register of special educational needs which is below the national average. The number of pupils for whom a statement of need is held is above average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, although a number of pupils have specific difficulties. 15.5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is broadly average. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below the national average. There are a small number of pupils from ethnic minority and Traveller backgrounds.

The school is situated to the north east of Walsall and serves an area of mixed housing. Pupils come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds, although a larger than average proportion are disadvantaged. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers the full range. The average level of attainment on entry has been rising over recent years and overall is now close to the national average as shown by performance in the national tests for eleven year olds.

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

This is a good and improving school. Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 have improved to be close to the national averages as a result of the good teaching and positive responses of pupils. The Sixth Form is effective and students make good progress. The school is very well led by the headteacher and governors. Day-to-day and financial management are very good. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Good teaching.
- Improved attainment at Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and personal development.
- The very effective leadership and management of the school by senior managers and governors, especially governors' contribution to financial control and management.
- The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils especially in music.

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

- The effectiveness of middle managers in using a wide range of information to improve classroom practice.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Shire Oak School has continued to improve since the last inspection in September 1996. Standards are much higher at the end of Key Stage 3 and standards in the GCSE examinations have improved so that they are close the national figures for 2001, (although at the time of this inspection accurate validated data for 2001 is not yet available). The quality of teaching has improved significantly and is now judged to be good across the whole school. Pupils respond very well to their lessons, their personal development remains very good and their spiritual development is now good. The school has very effectively addressed the weaknesses found in 1996.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations taken in 2000. Validated results for 2001 were not available at the time of this inspection. The comparative results at the end of Year 13 are significantly affected by the small number of students taking these examinations.

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards that are above the national average. In the 2000 national assessments for 14-year-old pupils the percentage attaining the expected Level 5 or above was above the average for English and close to the average for mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 6 and above was well above the average in English and close to the average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools attainment in English was above the average, mathematics and science were close to the average. The improving standards reflect the school's concentration on improving the quality of teaching for pupils in Key Stage 3. Results show consistent improvement over the last three years and the improvement is above the national trend. When the results at Key Stage 3 are compared with these pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Current pupils' work in lessons and their written work also show improving standards and that good progress is being made in response to the good teaching they receive. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in attaining the targets set for them.

In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades was well below average. The percentage attaining 1 or more A\*-G grades was well below average. Generally pupils attained their best results in science, sociology, English and business studies and their worst results in mathematics, art and design, design and technology



and history. Generally girls are attaining slightly higher results than boys. Standards have been rising over the last three years at a similar rate to that found nationally. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades were close to the national average of 2000. The figure for one or more A\*-G grades was above last year's national figure. From lessons seen and a review of pupils' work, current pupils are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and work hard to attain the targets set for them. They respond particularly well to the *Successmaker* programme for literacy and numeracy.

A very small number of students followed GCE Advanced level courses in 2000 and 2001 so comparison with national data is of limited value. These students, however, make good progress, and attain grades which mostly reflect satisfactorily their earlier attainment at GCSE. For students following intermediate GNVQ courses, attainment in 2000 was below average. In 2001 results show a significant improvement with the percentage achieving a qualification being above the national average for 2000.

The school has set challenging targets for pupils' attainment for the whole school as well as for individual pupils and students.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. In lessons this contributes to pupils' learning and the progress they make.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop into mature young people.
Attendance	Barely satisfactory. The school works hard, however, to raise attendance levels.

Pupils show very positive responses to their lessons and the other activities provided by the school. They relate very well to one another and to their teachers. By the time they enter the Sixth Form students are mature and show a good understanding of the world around them. Pupils and students are polite and courteous to both visitors and each other, especially when moving round the school when stairways and corridors become congested. Attendance levels remain below average but there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in response to the school's hard work in tackling this issue.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
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Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good
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*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.*

Overall, the quality of teaching was judged to be good. In all 224 lessons or part lessons were observed during the inspection. 217 lessons were judged to satisfactory or better with 137 judged to be good or better. In only seven lessons was teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, very good relationships with pupils and deliver lively lessons, which enable pupils to learn and to make progress. In the good and very good lessons teachers encourage pupils to become enthusiastic and really interested in the work they are doing. The best teaching seen occurred in the Sixth Form, where students were encouraged to develop their own ideas and understanding. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good throughout the school with some very good teaching seen. In the other subjects of the curriculum teaching is good overall. Pupils respond well to the good teaching and make good progress overall.

Overall, the teaching of literacy in all subjects of the curriculum is at least satisfactory with some good examples of extended writing seen in subjects such as history. The teaching of numeracy is at least satisfactory with some good examples of the use of numeracy skills observed in art and design and science lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by learning support assistants and additional teachers. The programme of withdrawing pupils to work with support staff individually and using the *Successmaker* programme has a positive impact on the progress these pupils make.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets statutory requirements and is strongly enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Accurate assessment of individual pupils' needs ensures that there are targeted programmes to help these pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are many opportunities for development within the teaching programme and through extra-curricular activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school very effectively cares for pupils in a safe and secure working environment. However, the use of assessment information to set short term attainment targets is under-developed.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all its pupils and students. The provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, where music features as an outstanding example, significantly enhances the learning and personal development of many pupils and students.

The school has very good, well established systems for the care and support of pupils; although the monitoring of pupils' academic progress could be used more effectively to promote even better progress.

Parents have very positive views about the school and the school provides parents with a good range of information. Parents are encouraged to contact the school to discuss any specific issues at any time.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior managers set very clear goals for the development and direction of the school. Middle managers whilst effective could have their roles further developed, in further improving teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Outstanding. Their level of involvement and clarity of knowledge and understanding of the school are exemplary.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A wide range of data and information is used to monitor the effectiveness of the school. The information gained could be used more effectively in further improving teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Outstanding. The school maximises the effectiveness of the resources available to it.

The management of the school by the headteacher and senior staff is a major strength of the school. They are well informed and they have established very effective decision making processes. They are working hard to develop similar skills in middle managers to enhance their contribution to the development of the school. The governors are fully involved in the work of the school and have an excellent understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The governors and managers obtain the best value in their purchases; through detailed evaluation of the work of the school they are applying the principles of best value fully. Financial management is exemplary.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very popular school.</li> <li>• The progress pupils make and the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information available for parents.</li> </ul>

<p>standards they attain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes.</li> <li>• Good teaching.</li> <li>• Good support for pupils.</li> <li>• Good management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting arrangements in some subjects..</li> </ul>
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Inspectors agree with parents that this is a good school where good teaching is now producing improved standards. Pupils are very positive and are keen to learn and make progress. They behave well and are well supported by their teachers. The school is well managed and this is particularly so with regard to the significant increase in pupil numbers. Generally the information provided for parents is good although some limitations were identified in the information for Sixth Form students and their parents. Overall the setting arrangements for pupils provide them with access to work at an appropriate level in the subjects of the curriculum.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

**SHIRE OAK SCHOOL**

The Sixth Form of this foundation comprehensive school has 142 students which is smaller than average but is expanding as larger year groups move through the school. There are 39 students in Year 13 and 103 in Year 12. The very small number of pupils of minority ethnic origin speak English as a first language. A range of subjects and vocational courses are provided. The school met its target of recruiting half of the Year 11 pupils into the Sixth Form in September 2001. The majority of pupils are on two year programmes leading to A-level with fewer following intermediate and advanced vocational certificate of education courses. The school has a policy of encouraging access to AS and A-level courses by accepting students with five grade Cs and above at GCSE. There are a few pupils with special educational needs in the Sixth Form.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The Sixth Form is cost effective. Fluctuations in the relatively small numbers of students each year makes direct comparison with national results misleading, but in 2000 the average points score in A/AS-levels was close to the national average. Students started their courses with an average 10% gap in performance below the national average. After two years in the Sixth Form at A/AS-level, their performance in 2000 was close to the national average, indicating good progress on A-level courses. National statistics for 2001 are not yet available. Results of the students following vocational courses were below the national average in 2000. In intermediate level GNVQ assessments there was a significant improvement in results in 2001 with 76% of students gaining a qualification which is higher than the national percentage for 2000. The work and assessment information relating to current students indicates that they are also in general making good progress. Very few pupils leave during their courses. The Sixth Form caters well for its students providing, in addition to a range of courses, an enhanced programme including religious education and Key Skills. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good overall. Of the subjects inspected in detail it is very good in mathematics and consistently good in biology, sociology and English and satisfactory in business education.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good. Pupils respond well to the enthusiasm of their knowledgeable teachers and the variety and brisk pace of lessons.
- Leadership of the Sixth Form is strong. Foundations of a good curriculum have been laid down to meet the needs of the expanding numbers of students.
- Students have plenty of opportunity to take responsibility in the school.
- The foundation studies programme covers Key Skills and enhances the curriculum effectively.

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

- Information and advice about opportunities in the Sixth Form and in higher and further education.
- Involvement of AS and A-level students in target setting.
- Monitoring of individual students' academic progress and attendance at lessons to ensure early intervention when students are having difficulties.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Sound and improving.</b> A-level results in 2000 were just below the national average. Very good teaching is resulting in students making good progress. Monitoring of students' performance does not always identify the help that they require sufficiently well.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Results at AS-level in 2001 were above the provisional national average. Teaching is good and student numbers have doubled. Students are insufficiently involved in target setting and assessments do not always identify what they need to do to improve.
Business Studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results are improving with all students gaining pass grades in the 2000 and 2001 A-level examinations. A good range of teaching methods, including use of information and communication technology, is developing. Schemes of work lack challenge for the most able. Monitoring and evaluation of students' performance is not sufficiently focussed on ways of raising standards.
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> Results have improved and are average or above. Teaching is good and challenges students effectively. Good rapport between teacher and students enhances learning. Leadership is very good, but monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are insufficiently rigorous.
English	<b>Good.</b> Standards of attainment are above average. Teaching is good and relationships are positive and productive. The use of information about students' performance does not inform targets sufficiently well; and monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour.

Work was sampled in 15 other subjects and courses. Teaching is a particular strength in the Sixth Form. It was outstanding or very good in approximately one third of all lessons seen. Excellent lessons were seen in mathematics and religious studies. Monitoring of students' progress is insufficiently rigorous to find out what help they need.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are generally well supported. They are inducted well into the Sixth Form but their progress is inconsistently monitored during modules of work. As a result they lack sufficient early feedback to enable them to improve when their performance falls below expectations. Information and advice about courses post 16 and post 18 are insufficient.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. Development planning has successfully concentrated on maintaining a breadth of subjects and vocational courses on offer and on recruiting larger numbers of students. Performance of students is analysed, but the analysis has yet to be translated into meaningful targets for each student.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the Sixth Form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high quality of teaching and challenge to do their best.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible to help if they have difficulties.</li> <li>• They are helped and encouraged to study and research topics independently.</li> <li>• The school helped them to settle well into the Sixth Form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on what they should do in the Sixth Form.</li> <li>• Advice on what they should do after they leave school.</li> <li>• Their treatment as responsible young adults.</li> <li>• The response of the school to their views.</li> </ul>

The Year 12 students had been in the Sixth Form for less than a week when the questionnaire was completed. Inspectors support the students' views that they are well taught and challenged to do their best. However, students feel a lack of awareness of educational opportunities despite a well planned programme of preparation for Sixth Form and further and higher education. In Year 13 they have yet to complete the programme of support for university application. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility in the school and their involvement is valued by staff and governors. There are some opportunities for students' views to be expressed by representations on committees in school.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 Overall, standards in Key Stages 3 are above average and in Key Stage 4 are now close to the average. In the Sixth Form standards are at least typical of those expected for these courses and occasionally above.

#### *Main School (Years 7 to 11)*

##### *Key Stage 3*

- 2 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards which are close to the national average. In the 2000 national assessments for 14-year-olds, pupils attained standards in English that were well above the national expectation; standards in mathematics and science were close to the average. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard of Level 5+ was above the average in English and close to the average in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 or above was well above the national average in English and close to the average in mathematics and science. In comparison with schools having similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals standards in English were well above average for Level 5+ and well above average for Level 6+. For mathematics they were above average for Level 5+ and close to the average for Level 6+. Science was above average on both measures. There has been a general trend of rising standards over the last three years above the national trend. In the 2001 assessments standards have been broadly maintained at similar levels to 2000.
- 3 In the other subjects of the curriculum, based upon teachers' assessments standards are close to the national average in all subjects, except in design and technology where standards are lower than the other subjects for higher attaining pupils. Girls are generally attaining higher standards than boys in all subjects of the curriculum.
- 4 Standards of literacy and numeracy are typical of those expected. There are some good opportunities for pupils to develop these skills in the subjects of the curriculum.
- 5 From a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work and the work they do in lessons, inspectors judge that standards are close to those expected in all subjects. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive.

##### *Key Stage 4*

- 6 By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are now close to the average in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C grades was well below the national average. The percentage attaining one or more and five or more A\*-G grades were both well below the national average. When the achievement is measured in terms of average points scores (where A grade = 8 and G grade = 1)



standards were well below average. Girls achieved better standards than boys within this pattern. Standards have been rising at the same rate as found nationally over the last three years. The highest standards were attained in science and business studies, but in all other subjects standards were below the national averages with significant numbers of pupils attaining E, F, G and U grades. In 2001, whilst validated comparative data was not available for this year, a comparison of the 2001 results with the 2000 national data shows standards improved significantly. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C grades and five or more A\*-G grades was close to the 2000 national average and the percentage attaining one or more A\*-G grades was above the 2000 national average.

- 7 From a scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of lessons and talking to pupils inspectors judge that current standards are similar to those attained in GCSE in 2001. Standards in all subjects are now typical of those found nationally.

### ***Performance in subjects and skills***

- 8 In English pupils are attaining standards, which are above those expected at Key Stage 3 and close to the average by the end of Key Stage 4. From their current work pupils show improving writing skills particularly in Key Stage 3.
- 9 In mathematics pupils are attaining standards which are close to the average by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.
- 10 In science standards are close to the average by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 in all aspects of the science curriculum.
- 11 Standards in information and communication technology are at least in line with those expected by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are able to use their word processing skills to present work in English and other subjects of the curriculum. They can use other equipment such as sensors to support their science learning and to present information using spreadsheets and graphs. All pupils are beginning to become regular users of the Internet to access information associated with their coursework.
- 12 Standards in religious education are close to the average. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 follow the appropriate course and good teaching ensures they are making good progress. The spiritual dimension of this subject is particularly strong. There is provision for religious education for Sixth Form students, which covers a wide range of philosophical ideas as well as a multi-faith dimension.
- 13 The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Many subjects contribute to this development and there is a strong focus in improving these skills for pupils with special educational needs.

### ***Pupils with special educational needs***

- 14 In English, history and information and communication technology pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress across both key stages, and where supported carefully by teachers or learning support assistants, they make good progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all other subjects at both key stages, except in mathematics. In Key Stage 3, they make barely satisfactory progress in mathematics and in Key Stage 4, progress is unsatisfactory, mostly because work is not based on these students' prior understanding, work is repetitive and is not sufficiently practically based.

### ***Pupils' progress and achievement by age 16***

- 15 As Shire Oak School has grown over the last five years, the pupils' attainment on entry has risen so that in 2001 pupils entering the school had attained broadly average standards at the end of their primary schooling. All pupils work hard and show generally good progress in their learning irrespective of their ability or background. Although attainment by the age of 16 remains close to the average, this represents good progress made by pupils who entered the school with below average levels of attainment five years ago. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 16 There has been a marked improvement in standards in all subjects since the time of the last inspection particularly for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive. The improved quality of teaching is already having a strong impact on the progress pupils make.
- 17 The school identifies individual pupil attainment targets based on a wide range of assessment and prior attainment information. The pupil targets form the basis of the challenging whole school attainment targets. Progress towards the targets is monitored by senior managers but pupils are insufficiently involved in the setting or monitoring of their own targets.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 18 The inspection took place early in the autumn term and students in Year 13 had just started the second year of their A-level courses. Students in Year 12 had been in the Sixth Form for less than three weeks. The current and past Year 13 is small and individual subject teaching groups are therefore small, for example, there were four students following the Year 13 mathematics course. Once students begin their courses very few leave before completing them and students' mobility has negligible impact on overall standards.
- 19 In the 2000 GCE A-level and AS-level examinations, students' who were entered for two or more subjects gained average points scores which were close to the national average, although only 13 students were entered. In comparison with other Sixth Forms in secondary schools and all post 16 providers, attainment was close to the average for all students, although boys attained standards well above the average and girls below the average. In business studies attainment was below average whilst in sociology standards were well above average. The numbers entered in the other subjects inspected in detail were too small for meaningful comparison. Over the last three years results have fluctuated significantly but the number of students on any

subject course has only reached ten on three occasions.

- 20 In the 2001 examinations the average points score was below that for 2000 with 20 students entered for two or more GCE A-level or AS-level examinations. Owing to the small and varying numbers of boys and girls, it is unreliable to compare their relative attainment or their attainment against national averages for individual subjects.
- 21 In intermediate level GNVQ assessments, the number of candidates gaining a qualification was well below the national average in 2000. There was a significant improvement in results in 2001 with 76% of students gaining a qualification which is higher than the national percentage for 2000.
- 22 From lessons and discussions with students inspectors judge that current Year 13 students, although small in number, are on course to attain standards which reflect their prior attainment in GCSE examinations and that the larger number of students in Year 12 have made a good start to their AS-level courses in all subjects.
- 23 The school identifies individual targets for students based upon a wide range of assessment data including their GCSE results. The targets, however, are for end of course attainment and are not sufficiently used by teachers to identify short term targets with students. The overall targets for the school are appropriately challenging and are based on good evaluation of data and comparison with other schools. The work seen in the school at this early stage of the year indicates that it is on course to achieve the targets it has set for 2002.
- 24 Students demonstrate at least average attainment in Key Skills with many students showing well above average attainment especially in information and communication technology. Standards in religious education are high. All Sixth Form students follow a wide ranging programme which develops their spirituality and their knowledge of world religions.
- 25 Overall, students are achieving appropriately. They work hard and show good levels of concentration and involvement. They are developing good independent learning skills and show a growing ability to take responsibility for their own learning and progress. Their progress would be further enhanced by more effective use of short term target setting by teachers and students.

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

- 26 Pupils, and students in the Sixth Form, have very positive attitudes to school, and are mostly keen and eager to come to school. They know that they are safe, and will achieve well. The quality and range of the curricular and extra-curricular activities, the well maintained building and accessible facilities help to make pupils want to attend and participate. The pupils feel well known and cared for by all staff from the headteacher down.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 27 Despite the pupils' very positive attitudes to school, attendance is still below 90% and, though it is much improved since the previous inspection, remains unsatisfactory. The school is still a long way from meeting the attendance target of 92% it has set itself and the rate of authorised absence is high. The school has done a great deal to analyse the reasons for this, and has identified several groups at risk and factors affecting attendance. The measures that the school has put in place to raise attendance are appropriate and as effective as possible for those groups of pupils who are targeted. However, the continuing absence problem indicates that there are still pupils who are not motivated or engaged sufficiently to overcome the barriers to good attendance which reduces the progress they make and lowers the standards they attain.
- 28 Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to their work, they try hard to complete the work set in class, often showing sustained concentration and perseverance, even when they are unsure of what they are to do. In small group work, they are often animated and enthusiastic about their subjects. Their attitudes to the special educational needs staff and computer based learning are very good as they become independent learners and are able to monitor their own progress very effectively. Occasionally, when work is too easy in classes, some of these pupils become bored and this affects the progress they make in lessons, for example, in some mathematics lessons.
- 29 Pupils show a great deal of interest in the life of the school, and a high proportion become involved in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the Shire Oak Award. This is particularly noticeable for pupils in Key Stage 3. Across the school many pupils participate in clubs, sports teams, musical and dramatic activities and the many other activities provided. They participate actively in many lesson activities, often with much enthusiasm, for example, in music lessons.
- 30 When given the opportunity, either in lessons or through other school activities, pupils show good initiative and take responsibility willingly. For example, Year 10 pupils lead assemblies for Key Stage 3 pupils, with maturity and a high degree of personal responsibility.
- 31 Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is very good, and makes an important positive contribution to pupils' progress. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are constructive and very good. Bullying is rare and parents and pupils consider that it is dealt with promptly and effectively. There are very few racist incidents, and the ethos in classrooms and around the school is inclusive. Pupils are almost always courteous to each other, and to staff, visitors and other adults. They show a high level of respect for the feeling, beliefs and values of others. There is little vandalism or graffiti. Parents support the school's approaches to behaviour and discipline strongly, and have very positive views about the school as a whole.
- 32 There are no significant groups of pupils who have a consistently negative attitude to the school. Those pupils who misbehave are well known to the teachers, who always maintain a caring and positive sense of care and purpose to all pupils. Consequently, there were only two permanent exclusions last year, and the incidence of short-term exclusions is low and involves relatively few pupils. Procedures for exclusions are

carried out to the letter.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 33 Students are keen to come to school and are prepared to become involved in the life of the school. They are interested in their work and develop their own personal learning skills. They behave in a mature manner and set a good example for younger pupils to aspire to. There are many opportunities for students to take responsibility and many become involved in activities with younger pupils, for example, when taking a leading role with ensembles in musical activities.
- 34 They form very good relationships with one another and their teachers and this contributes significantly to their learning and progress.
- 35 Attendance levels are broadly satisfactory but teachers do not always link absence to reduced progress and attainment so that a few students make less progress than they should. Teachers monitor attendance at lessons but do not always discuss the impact of their absence with students.
- 36 Students are generally very positive about the school and their Sixth Form experiences but some would have liked more information about Sixth Form courses, especially Key Skills. A few would also like more information regarding further and higher education opportunities.

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

- 37 Overall the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good. In Key Stage 3 and 4 it was good and in the Sixth Form it was very good.
- 38 The teaching programme is planned on a two-week cycle and teaching is mainly in sets, based on pupils' attainment in individual subjects with specialist subject teachers. Ten staff are involved in teaching the complementary studies programme which covers personal, social and health education.
- 39 In all 224 lessons or part lessons were observed by inspectors; 95 in Key Stage 3, 83 in Key Stage 4 and 46 in the Sixth Form. Of the total lessons observed only seven were judged to be unsatisfactory and the remainder were judged satisfactory or better. 137 lessons were judged to be good or better and 47 lessons were judged to be very good or outstanding.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 40 In all 178 lessons or part lessons were observed in the main school. Only six lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory, and nearly two thirds were judged to be good or better and more than a sixth were judged to be very good. Marginally more good and better teaching was seen in Key Stage 3. This is an improvement since the last

inspection. The teachers have worked hard to achieve this through a programme of monitoring and training.

- 41 In all teaching seen teachers had secure subject knowledge and used a range of methods to deliver mostly effective lessons. Where teaching had a weakness it was because teachers made insufficient use of assessment information to guide their lesson planning and as a result, such lessons lacked challenge and were delivered more slowly.
- 42 Teachers in all subjects support the development of pupils' literacy skills effectively. They work hard to ensure that pupils use language and vocabulary appropriately in lessons such as science, design and technology and religious education. The development of their speaking and writing skills are well supported, for example, in history where pupils produce extended pieces of writing. Pupils in many lessons in all subjects show good listening skills and respond well to both their teachers and their peers.
- 43 Teachers support the development of pupils' numeracy skills where appropriate. There were, for example, some effective examples of measuring skill development in art and design and of graphical presentation of data in science.
- 44 Overall the teaching of English is satisfactory. Twenty-five lessons of English were observed in Key Stages 3 and 4. Twenty-four lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better, with ten judged to be good or better. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and manage their pupils well. Where teaching has weaknesses teachers' planning does not identify sufficiently challenging work.
- 45 Overall, the teaching of mathematics is good. In all 21 lessons of mathematics were seen in Key Stage 3 and 4. Nineteen lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better with 14 judged to be good or very good. Teachers' planning is generally good but where there are weaknesses teachers make insufficient use of assessment information to plan work to meet the needs of all pupils.
- 46 Overall the teaching of science is good. In all 19 lessons of science were observed in Key Stages 3 and 4. Eighteen lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better with ten judged to be good or very good. Teachers use their secure knowledge of science to plan and deliver good lessons. They use their marking of pupils' work to improve the progress pupils make.
- 47 In all 11 lessons of information and communication technology were observed. Of these ten were judged to be satisfactory or better, with eight judged good or better. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to deliver lively lessons, which enable pupils to learn effectively. For example, in a key skills lesson with Year 10 the teacher used Class Tutor Software very effectively to demonstrate nationally available information. The much-improved teaching of the subject is leading to significantly improved standards since the last inspection.
- 48 In all seven lessons of religious education were observed. Four lessons were judged to be good or better and none were judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers use their

good knowledge to plan effective lessons, which develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are particularly good at developing pupils' spiritual understanding often requiring personal responses, which show this. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Abraham pupils were asked to reflect upon what his feelings might have been as he left home; and responded with a range of examples based upon their own feelings.

- 49 Overall teaching had significantly more strengths than weaknesses. Generally teachers' lesson planning was good, although they do not use assessment information sufficiently to guide them. Most lessons provided challenging materials and activities delivered using a range of methods so enabling pupils to make good progress. All lessons demonstrated very effective pupil management so that the very good behaviour of pupils contributed significantly to the amount they learnt. Teachers use homework regularly and appropriately to support classroom learning. An overall weakness was the variability of teachers' marking of pupils' work. In the best examples teachers identified what pupils knew and did well and what they should do to improve whilst in other examples seen marking was limited to a bald indication of right or wrong responses. Many teachers were beginning to use effectively the recently installed *interactive white boards* and in many lessons this enhanced pupils' learning.
- 50 The quality of teaching for pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory overall across the school. However, in the special educational needs department the standard is of a higher quality; teaching seen was always at least good and was sometimes very good. This is because teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils and plan their lessons with their specific learning needs as a focus. This allows the pupils to learn quickly and thus to make good progress. Across the school, there are good examples of teaching in information and communication technology, history and English particularly, where teachers and learning support assistants work very effectively to make sure pupils know what they are to do during lessons. In these subjects, teachers' often use learning targets to plan work and share these with the pupils, so they know what they need to learn during a lesson and how to improve their work at home. In addition, teachers' use of marking also shows good examples where learning targets are reinforced and where new targets for learning are set. However, in some other subjects, in both key stages, the lack of subject-specific learning targets in lesson planning and pertinent marking in books, are weaknesses that impede these pupils' learning. Teaching is often not based on students' prior understanding, nor pupils' strengths in learning.
- 51 Pupils are making good progress in their learning as a result of the effective teaching they receive. Lessons nearly always build upon previous learning and effective summaries at the end of lessons frequently demonstrate that good learning has taken place. Teachers expect their pupils to concentrate and work hard and pupils readily respond by behaving well and trying hard.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 52 Sixth Form students are taught in specialist subject groups by specialist subject teachers for their main subjects. They are also taught Key Skills and religious

education in mixed groups depending on their main subject choices. Inspectors observed 46 full or part lessons across most subjects studied in the Sixth Form. At least four lessons were observed in the focus subjects of English, mathematics, biology, sociology and business education. Discussions were held with the staff with responsibility for the focus subjects. Groups of students studying these subjects discussed their work with inspectors.

- 53 Overall the quality of teaching in the Sixth Form is very good which ensures that most students make good progress in their chosen subjects and achieve appropriate standards by the end of their courses.
- 54 In all 46 lessons of Sixth Form teaching were observed. Fifteen lessons were judged to be satisfactory, 15 good, 13 very good and two outstanding. One lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory.
- 55 In the focus subjects of English, mathematics, biology, business education and sociology teaching observed was always at least satisfactory. In mathematics teaching was consistently very good and occasionally outstanding, in business education teaching was satisfactory and in the other subjects teaching was consistently good.
- 56 The Key Skills of communication, application of number and information and communication technology are taught effectively so that students develop these skills to an appropriate level to support their learning in their main subjects.
- 57 When discussing their work with them, inspectors found students to be mature and articulate. They talked readily about their work identifying what they could do well and what they needed to do to obtain their target grades at the end of the course. However, they are less aware of shorter term targets to help them progress at a faster rate.
- 58 Three lessons of religious education were observed. Teaching was judged to be good or better in all of them with one lesson judged to be outstanding. Students responded well to the mature approach taken to the subject and were ready to offer their own personal responses and understanding to the subject matter under consideration.
- 59 There were very few weaknesses observed in Sixth Form teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to plan stimulating learning opportunities on almost all occasions. They frequently inspire their students with their wide subject knowledge and genuine love of their subject so enhancing the learning and enabling high standards to be achieved. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher enthused the students to fully understand logarithm graphs and enabled them to see the full potential of the processes. Where teaching has relative weaknesses it is in teachers' use of shared shorter term learning targets with students and identifying causes of lower than expected attainment such as significant levels of absence.
- 60 Students are mature and well motivated so that lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of shared learning without any need for overt management by the teacher.
- 61 Teachers understand the needs of the few students with special educational needs,



monitor their progress and provide appropriate support.

- 62 Overall the very good teaching builds on students' previous learning. This was particularly so for Year 12 students at the early stages of their Sixth Form courses where teachers effectively related the current work to work done on GCSE courses.

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

- 63 The curriculum at Shire Oak School is a strength, giving equality of access and opportunity to all pupils. All statutory requirements are met, except that there is no provision for a daily act of collective worship for students in the Sixth Form. The curricular and extra-curricular opportunities provide a good range of worthwhile opportunities and make a good contribution to the learning and progress of most pupils at all ages. The quality of curriculum provision has improved since the previous inspection.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 64 At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is good, providing a broad and balanced range of subjects that meets the needs of all pupils. All statutory requirements are met. Sufficient time is given to English and mathematics to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and other subjects make a satisfactory contribution to developing and applying these aspects of pupils' learning. Sufficient time is given for all other National Curriculum subjects and religious education to teach the nationally required programmes of study.
- 65 At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is satisfactory. The core curriculum provides sufficient time for English and mathematics. The time for information and communication technology and religious education was too low at the last inspection. This has been dealt with and reasonable time is now provided for both subjects. A good amount of time is provided for personal, social, health and careers education.
- 66 All pupils have equal access to the full range of courses and experiences that the school offers, and this is a strength of the school. A particularly good example is pupils' access to modern foreign language courses. The school has a number of strategies to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils are placed in teaching sets in most subjects from early in Year 7, and this helps to ensure that teaching can focus on the needs of different abilities. In a small number of cases there are problems for pupils who are unable to join the most appropriate group in a subject because of setting arrangements that run across subjects. Some sets have unbalanced numbers of boys and girls. The school is not monitoring the reasons for this or its possible impact on pupils' achievement closely enough.
- 67 For lower attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 there is a vocational information and communication technology course. Lower achieving pupils have the opportunity to be entered for certificates of achievement in some subjects rather than for the full GCSE examination in all their subjects. A small number of pupils are disapplied from modern foreign languages and are given additional support in basic skills as an

alternative. A few pupils are following alternative vocational programmes off-site. Most pupils are following a full programme of GCSE courses. The provision for vocational studies is limited. The school is aware of this, and is awaiting the new vocational courses to come on stream in 2002 before making any changes.

- 68 Special educational needs has a high profile in school. The special educational needs policy is well thought out, follows all recommendations in the national Code of Practice and is implemented in a very positive manner. The computer based learning programme and small group work with teachers and learning support assistants make very positive contributions to raising these pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy. The 'homework club' and lunchtime '*Successmaker* club' also support students well and enable them to reinforce their class learning. The special educational needs staff are to be commended as they provide a very high level of interaction with their pupils and this improves the quality of pupils' learning significantly. However, many pupils with special educational needs do not receive a mathematics curriculum which suits their intellectual potential, often it is not practically based and does not take account of individual pupils' learning needs or their strengths in learning.
- 69 The provision of time for personal, social and health education and citizenship through the *complementary studies* course in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. The programme of work covers all the main areas expected, including drugs and sex education. The programme covers content and knowledge well, but does not always give pupils the opportunities to develop skills and attitudes that enable them to make short and long-term choices about the personal and social issues that will challenge them.
- 70 The provision for extra-curricular activities for all year groups is very good, and a strength of the school. There is a wide range of sporting and cultural activities for boys and girls, and a good proportion of pupils and students participate in these. Larger than usual numbers of pupils are involved in a wide range of excellent musical activities. There are regular trips and visits to local, national and international venues.
- 71 The careers guidance and work-related curriculum are good overall. The arrangements for work experience are very good, and very good support and guidance is provided for pupils by the local careers service. The units of careers education in the complementary studies programme are sound, with some very good theme days devoted to work related education. The co-ordination of all aspects of careers to ensure that pupils receive a coherent programme is a relative weakness.
- 72 The school day provides a notional 25 hours teaching time each week, which matches government recommendations. However, the organisation of the timetable does not take into account the time it takes for pupils to move between lessons when there is no formal break, and pupils lose up to twenty minutes each day or one hour each week as a result. Further time is often lost when assemblies eat into lesson time. These difficulties are not resulting in less learning due to the high quality of teaching pupils receive.
- 73 The school has good links with the local business community, which provides direct input into the curriculum through, for example, careers conferences, counselling and mock interviews.

- 74 The links with the local educational community are sound. The arrangements for pupils' transfer at age eleven with a minimum of disruption are good. Some departments, for example English and mathematics, have established projects with local primary schools to ensure that progress is maintained at the time of transition, but this is not the case across all subjects.
- 75 Teachers across the school encourage pupils to make good use of the Internet. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress. Good examples were noted, for example, in music, science, geography and mathematics.
- 76 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good, and a strength of the school.
- 77 Opportunities for spiritual development are good, and have improved since the previous inspection. Departments have been encouraged to think about how they contribute to this aspect of pupils' development. Assemblies provide good opportunities for spiritual development, for example, when Key Stage 3 pupils were invited to reflect on how people of different faiths ask for forgiveness and celebrate new beginnings.
- 78 Some very good examples of spiritual development are seen in lessons. For example, in a child development lesson in Year 11, pupils were able to discuss and reflect on the issues of suffering and bereavement after watching a video on children in hospital, which showed perceptive understanding of the issues. Pupils in a Year 7 religious education lesson on Abraham were able to recognise and explore the importance of religious experience to individuals.
- 79 Very good opportunities for moral development are widespread, and are found in lessons and in most aspects of the daily life of the school. The expectation that pupils will recognise right and wrong and behave accordingly is reinforced consistently by teachers in classes and around the school. This makes a noticeable contribution to high standards of behaviour and positive relationships.
- 80 Subjects make a good contribution to these aspects. Moral issues are constantly raised in complementary studies and in religious education. In complementary studies, for example, a group of Year 10 boys were able to analyse the moral aspects of the right to life and freedom in the light of recent violent events, and discussed the issues sensitively and sensibly. Year 13 students in geography looked carefully at the moral issues raised by immigration and asylum seekers.
- 81 Provision for social development is very good, particularly because good social behaviour is encouraged and expected throughout the school. The complementary studies programme includes several units on citizenship that promote social development effectively.
- 82 There are some opportunities for pupils, particularly as they get older, to participate in activities that enable them to take responsibility and show initiative. The very good provision of extra-curricular activities gives many opportunities for social

development. Sixth Form pupils, for example, act as prefects. They also have a Sixth Form committee, but no such opportunity exists for younger pupils.

- 83 A significant number of pupils - up to half the year group in Years 8 and 9 - participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and in the Shire Oak Award. These activities make a significant contribution to developing pupils' social skills and giving them the chance to develop independence and initiative. In classes, by contrast, much work is characterised by teacher led activities. Group work and other independent work that would encourage the development of social skills and give opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning are relatively uncommon.
- 84 The provision for cultural development is good. Many subjects provide a curriculum that deliberately looks at a range of cultures. In art, for example, work on African and native American art is part of the curriculum. In religious education world religions are studied in some depth. Music from different cultures is studied. Opportunities for pupils to attend or take part in musical, dramatic and sporting activities are frequent. These opportunities make a positive contribution to the pupils' positive attitudes to each other and to pupils from different cultural backgrounds, and the fact that racist incidents are very few.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 85 The curriculum for students aged 16 to 19 provides a good range of A and A/S courses. All students have access to an appropriate curriculum, which includes religious education and citizenship. Students also have a good programme of key skills, religious education and personal and social education. The opportunities for taking a wider range of vocational courses is very limited, particularly considering the wide range of ability that is encouraged to enter the Sixth Form.
- 86 The number of students in Year 13 is small and this results in small teaching groups. Subjects are taught in separate small groups and there are no combined Year 12 and 13 groups. The school has managed to sustain a traditional range of A-level subjects, which broadly meets the needs of most students. The numbers in Year 12 have risen to over 100 and this has resulted in larger teaching groups in most subjects and two groups in popular subjects such as mathematics.
- 87 There is effective curriculum planning which ensures that Sixth Form courses build upon students' GCSE learning. For example, in Year 12 the first mathematics modules studied have direct links with the GCSE programme and provides a good induction process.
- 88 There is a teaching programme of Key Skills followed by all students. This allows the opportunity for students to attain the appropriate standards in communication, application of number and information and communication technology.
- 89 Teachers identify work to be done outside lessons and have high expectations of a mature approach to study to which students respond positively. Teachers make themselves available to students for additional support where students are having

difficulties. The school monitors students' performance and provides a wide range of information. However, the information is not being used sufficiently to impact on the daily work of students.

- 90 The Sixth Form curriculum is enhanced by the opportunities for extra-curricular activities, which range from musical performance to supporting younger pupils in subjects such as information and communication technology. Many students become involved in these activities.
- 91 Students showed some concerns at the effectiveness of careers guidance and the information made available to them for Sixth Form subject choices. They also felt that limited information was available regarding post 18 higher and further educational options. Inspectors judged overall that the information available was appropriate with the exception of the key skills programme. The programme of information regarding post 18 opportunities had not yet begun for Year 13 students.
- 92 There are limited links with the local community and the school is not involved in any collaborative work with other school or college Sixth Forms.
- 93 The school effectively supports students' personal development through the religious education programme and personal and social education programme. There were occasions observed during the inspection when students reflected upon important issues both personal and worldwide. Collective worship is limited and although there is a *thought for the day* this is not always considered sufficiently.
- 94 Overall the additional curriculum programme and the many opportunities for students to take responsibility and interact with younger pupils ensures that students' personal development is good.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 95 The quality of pastoral care throughout the school is very high. Staff have maintained and built on the very good pastoral systems praised in the previous inspection report.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 96 Arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including those for child protection and first aid, are very good. The arrangements for child protection are clear and comply fully with requirements. All staff are aware of them. The procedures for first aid and the administration of medicines in school are very good. The school has a good number of staff appropriately trained in first aid. Accidents and injuries are clearly recorded and parents appropriately informed. There are comprehensive policies in place for health and safety and regular, documented health and safety checks are carried out. The school has trained several staff in health and safety and this helps to ensure that any issues are quickly identified and rectified. Teachers pay good attention to health and safety in lessons such as science, physical education and design and technology. Pupils are very well supervised outside lessons. Senior staff

regularly patrol the corridors and supervise outside.

- 97 The systems in place for monitoring pupils' personal development are very good. Form tutors and key stage co-ordinators know the pupils very well and use this knowledge sensitively to guide and support pupils individually. Form tutors have daily contact with their form and deliver the thought for the day; this enables them to monitor the ongoing personal development of pupils informally. However, this time is not used consistently well by all form tutors. Specialist teachers teach the timetabled programme of personal, health and social education, known as complementary studies. The quality of teaching is good, often very good, and the pupils value the lessons. The complementary studies programme is well structured into a series of modules and pupils receive one lesson a week. Pupils in Year 9 have a day devoted to issues of equal opportunities - *Equal People Day*. This is well planned and is well supported by people from outside the school. Year 10 pupils have a similar industry day.
- 98 The school has good measures in place to promote the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality. It has succeeded in improving the level of attendance since the previous inspection in 1996. Attendance has a high profile with pupils and their parents. Good and improving attendance are appropriately rewarded. All unexplained absences are rigorously followed up. Attendance is monitored closely and pupils causing concern are referred quickly to the education welfare officer. Parents are informed about their child's attendance and punctuality in reports; and where there are concerns parental support is sought as early as possible. However, there is a small but significant number of parents who do not support the school in its attempts to raise attendance and this has a negative impact on the attendance figures. The school routinely makes contact with home on the first day of absence when pupils have an unsatisfactory attendance record. Registers are taken in all lessons as a check on internal truancy. Lateness is monitored but this has a limited impact on the lateness caused by transport difficulties. The lateness to lessons is not systematically monitored although it leads to a significant loss of teaching time each week.
- 99 The school has very clear and effective systems in place to promote good behaviour and to monitor pupils' behaviour. The range of policies in place provides a strong framework for promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and tackling unacceptable behaviour such as bullying and harassment. Pupils understand the high standards expected of them; almost all rise to them. They are well motivated by the merit system and value the certificates and badges, particularly in Years 7-9. The monitoring system for unacceptable behaviour is well understood by pupils and implemented with a good level of consistency by teachers. Comprehensive records ensure that staff can monitor individual pupils' behaviour very well, over time. Parents are actively involved at an early stage in cases of serious or persistent poor behaviour and are generally supportive of the school. Appropriate procedures for exclusion are in place and followed consistently well. The anti-bullying policy is effective in practice, with both staff and pupils being aware of the appropriate procedures. Pupils report that bullying is infrequent and that it is very firmly and effectively dealt with when it does occur. They feel safe in school and are confident that there is always an adult to turn to in times of need.

- 100 The systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs are effective. The school meets the requirements of the national Code of Practice. The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs provide a firm basis for each pupil's progress, although some of the targets are not sufficiently precise and well focussed to ensure that all pupils make good progress. The national requirements of the statements of special educational needs are fully met. The monitoring and review of statements is effective and parents are appropriately involved. The support available in the classroom for pupils with special educational needs is of good quality but is not always sufficient. In the majority of lessons the work is appropriately matched to the needs of these pupils.
- 101 The staff in the special educational needs department have a good understanding of pupils' needs. They ensure that all subjects are accessible, and have carefully thought out strategies to enable students, particularly those with physical impairment, to cope with school life. The learning support assistants' contribution is very good and plays a significant part in supporting pupils. The special educational needs room is used well as a 'drop in' area where pupils can receive help with any difficulties they may have.
- 102 Assessment arrangements for pupils taking national tests and examinations meet all the legal requirements. However, day-to-day assessment practices are inconsistent between and sometimes within departments. Marking is not always providing regular assessment information or identifying what pupils need to do to improve. Departments use end of key stage data to assist planning for future developments and strategies, but rarely analyse and use ongoing assessment data to identify weaknesses and take action to improve the quality of provision and raise standards.
- 103 The school has developed robust monitoring systems to monitor pupils' academic performance at Key Stage 4. Departments provide the key stage co-ordinator with termly information on how well pupils are doing in relation to the targets they have been set. This enables the co-ordinator and her team of tutors to identify pupils who are not making the expected progress, either across subjects or within a particular subject. Pupils identified in this way are monitored more closely, and a support and intervention programme to meet their individual needs is put in place. This is effective in maintaining progress for these pupils as far as is possible.
- 104 Similar procedures are now being introduced at Key Stage 3. Up to this point, however, monitoring of academic performance has not been systematic or robust enough, depending on teachers' perceptions of pupils' effort rather than on reliable and consistent assessment data. Pupils have not been monitored closely enough to ensure that unsatisfactory academic progress has been identified and dealt with.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 105 The school's very good procedures and policies for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of students extend to the Sixth Form. Child protection procedures are fully in place and comply fully with legal requirements. All staff are aware of them. The Sixth Form benefits from the very good attention paid to monitoring health and safety

throughout the school.

- 106 The pastoral team of experienced Sixth Form tutors is well led by the head of Sixth Form. The team works hard to develop the very good quality of relationships between staff and students and to monitor students' personal development and needs. Students with special educational needs and those from a variety of ethnic origins are supported well in their studies.
- 107 The importance of regular attendance is effectively promoted with students. Attendance is closely monitored but heads of department and subject teachers do not use the information collected to identify under-attaining students and then promote higher standards. The Sixth Form staff promote and monitor behaviour well. Students are expected to set a good example to pupils lower down the school and to take responsibility for their own good behaviour.
- 108 The programme of foundation studies, taken by all students, addresses issues such as community involvement. The enterprise scheme, run as part of this course, involves students in setting up and running a business enterprise of value to the whole school community. Students are expected to take responsibility, for example, through the Sixth Form committee, which is involved in improving facilities.
- 109 Subject tutors know the students in their care well. Students are set overall targets using their prior attainment in GCSE as a guide. However, underachievement is not consistently picked up in all subjects prior to modular test results and this is a weakness. The head of Sixth Form undertakes random monitoring by work scrutiny and one-to-one interviews but this is not yet being used by heads of department or subject teachers to identify shorter term attainment targets for students.
- 110 Teachers identify assessments in their planning. Teachers regularly refer in lessons to how students have coped with homework, modifying their lessons to address any problems that have arisen. However, students are not sufficiently involved in their own assessment. There is little evidence of them assessing their own work in lessons. Although individual targets are set by teachers for end of course or module attainment, AS and A-level students are not involved in the target setting process and this is a weakness.
- 111 Parents are kept informed of students' progress and attainment through interim and full progress reports and have the opportunity to discuss student's progress with teachers.
- 112 The school provides effective support to the few students with special educational needs. In general, students praise the individual support they receive from teachers throughout the Sixth Form and appreciate the additional help they receive.
- 113 Some Year 12 students expressed concern about the advice they had received while deciding on their Sixth Form courses. They state that the advice provided in Years 10 and 11 was more geared to the needs of those pupils who intended to leave school. For example, some students entered the Sixth Form not realising that they would have to study key skills and religious studies. Information from discussion with students



during the inspection and from the students' questionnaire shows that the quality of advice, both within school and from the careers service, is insufficient. Pastoral support and guidance is, however, effective and based on the good knowledge teachers have of students' strengths and weaknesses, and the very good relationships that exist. Overall, students are happy with the induction procedures when they enter the Sixth Form.

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

- 114 Over three-quarters of parents, and those with parental responsibility, made their views known by completing the inspection questionnaire. This is an extremely high proportion. However, few parents attended the parents' meeting with inspectors. Those parents who made their views known are mostly very supportive of the school. In particular, they are confident that the school expects their child to work hard to achieve his or her best. Parents consider that the school is well led and managed and that the teaching is good. They appreciate the high standards of good behaviour achieved in the school and that the school is helping its pupils to become mature and responsible. There is general agreement that the school achieves high standards and their child makes good progress. The school is considered to be approachable and staff respond promptly when parents report a problem. However, a significant number of parents do not believe that they are kept well informed about their child's progress or that the school works closely with them. A similar number are concerned that their child does not get the right amount of homework.
- 115 Inspection evidence fully supports the parents' positive views of the school. Parents receive a full annual report and an interim report for their child each year as well as a consultation evening. However, inspection evidence supports the views of some parents that the reports are not consistently good in reporting specific progress within each subject. Inspectors judge that the school works hard and with considerable success to involve parents and to work with them for the good of their child. Inspectors also judged that homework is used well to support pupils' learning.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 116 The school provides a wide variety of useful information for parents. The prospectus is attractively presented and contains the full range of information required. The annual report of governors is very detailed and lengthy; this may discourage parents from reading it thoroughly. The well-presented termly newsletters give advance notice of events and celebrate pupils' achievements. Parents receive a booklet outlining the curriculum in Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11. These provide a wealth of detailed information, including the homework policy and timetables, pastoral systems and an outline of the curriculum for each subject. Open evenings are held for prospective parents and for those whose children are in Years 9 and 11, to discuss option choices. Effective systems are in place to ensure that parents are kept informed by telephone or letter of any concerns about attendance, attitude or behaviour. All pupils have a homework diary. This provides a wide range of useful information for them and their parents. Pupils in Year 7 have a new format of diary that contains more information and is more durable. The majority of parents sign the diaries weekly and some use the diary as a means of communicating with staff.

- 117 Parents of pupils with special educational needs make a positive contribution to their children's learning. Parents are kept informed regularly of their children's progress in learning, and are encouraged to keep the school informed of any difficulties they may have whilst in school.
- 118 Parents have one formal opportunity to consult with their child's teachers each year. In Year 7 there is an additional consultation evening to discuss how well their child is settling into school. Parents of pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 are appropriately involved in the process of option choice. However, the information provided for parents about Sixth Form courses does not currently include details of the courses in Key Skills and religious studies which all students follow. One full progress report and an interim report are provided each year. From the sample of reports seen, most provide a clear picture of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in the subject although there is variation in the quality of reports between subjects. Most provide a clear indication of attainment in all subjects, by providing the National Curriculum level or examination target the pupil is working at or towards, but the reporting of progress is inconsistent. Comments are not always sufficiently related to specific progress made in skills, knowledge and understanding for each subject. Targets for improvement are routinely set for each pupil in each subject but are frequently not sufficiently precise to guide future progress effectively. Too often the targets relate to attitude and organisation and do not focus sufficiently on specific ways pupils can improve their learning. In some instances teachers simply refer parents to the targets in pupils' exercise books; this is unsatisfactory. Parents have no active involvement in the target setting process. The school operates a system of checking the quality of pupils' written work and the outcome of these is sent by letter to all parents. This enables staff to enlist parental support to combat any underachievement as well as giving the opportunity to praise those whose work is of a high standard. Parents respond positively to this information.
- 119 The school has a comprehensive induction programme for new pupils that begins in Year 5 in the primary schools and involves parents appropriately. Year 7 pupils enjoyed their induction and state that it helped them to settle into school quickly. There is a school association but this is poorly supported by parents and many of the events planned are cancelled due to lack of interest. However, school concerts, productions and awards evenings are well attended and a significant number of parents support extra-curricular activities. An appropriate home-school agreement, the *Statement of Shared Values*, is in place. This emphasises the importance of school, parents and children working together. The school involves parents in regular consultation using questionnaires and shares the results. Parents are encouraged to contact the school whenever they have any concerns about their child's work, progress or behaviour. Pastoral staff contact parents at an early stage when concerns arise and try to involve parents in working towards a solution. A notable feature of the school's commitment to working closely with parents is the easy telephone accessibility of the senior staff, including the headteacher, before and after the school day.

### ***Sixth Form***

- 120 Parents express overall satisfaction with the quality and range of the Sixth Form provision and are supportive of it. However, some dissatisfaction was expressed about the quality of information parents received about the curriculum, especially that they had not been informed that their son or daughter would have to follow the courses in key skills and religious studies in addition to their chosen subjects and foundation studies. This concern is justified, as the current Sixth Form information booklet omits information about key skills and does not indicate that all students must follow the religious studies course.
- 121 Student's views of the provision are mixed, with Year 12 students being generally more positive than those in Year 13. Year 12 students almost unanimously state that the choice of courses available to them was appropriate to their needs and aspirations, that they received good advice and that the printed information was useful. They believe that they are well taught and that their teachers are accessible to discuss difficulties as they arise. Most students state that they have been helped to settle into the Sixth Form and are helped to develop their research and independent study skills. They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults and would advise others to join the Sixth Form. Despite these positive views, a significant minority of Year 12 students do not believe that the advice they received before entering the Sixth Form was constructive and helpful. A quarter of those who completed the questionnaire report a lack of confidence in the careers advice available to them. A fifth do not feel that they could rely on the support of the school if they encounter personal problems. Inspection evidence supports the positive views expressed by Year 12. However, inspection evidence also supports the view that the advice available on careers and further or higher education is insufficient. In some cases, the advice provided before students entered the Sixth Form was not sufficiently informed by careers guidance information. Inspection evidence does not support students' concerns about the availability and quality of personal support. The team of tutors in the Sixth Form is very experienced and there is a strong commitment to pastoral care throughout the two years..
- 122 The responses of Year 13 students to the questionnaire are much less positive. However, they agree almost unanimously that teachers are available to help them. They are confident that they are well taught, that the work is challenging and that they are helped to research and study independently. Almost half of Year 13 students share the concerns about the quality of the careers advice available both within the school and from the careers service. A similar number feels that the school does not listen to their views and does not treat them as responsible adults. Around a third disagree that they were well advised about the courses to follow and are unhappy about the choices available. They do not feel well informed about their progress and are not confident that their work is thoroughly assessed. A quarter do not feel that the school would help if they encountered personal problems and did not help them sufficiently to settle into the Sixth Form. Inspection evidence supports the positive opinions about the quality of teaching and the negative ones about careers advice. However, the school does listen to the views of the Sixth Form; there is a Sixth Form committee, which is involved in discussing ways of improving facilities. Members of the Sixth Form sit on the school health and safety committee and have helped to organise school association events. They are given a range of other responsibilities commensurate with their age. Work is not consistently well assessed and students are not always shown how to improve the quality of their work. However, there are examples of

good practice that the school can build on. While the present Year 13 were in Year 12 they experienced some disruption due to circumstances beyond the school's control; this has had some negative effect on their perceptions.

- 123 Parents have an informative booklet about the Sixth Form and are invited to an open evening while their child is in Year 11. However, the current written information does not make the requirements for key skills and religious studies sufficiently clear and this has resulted in some dissatisfaction about the workload student's have. Apart from this omission the quality of information for parents is very high. Parents receive regular reports and interim reports on the progress of their son or daughter. However, information on attitude, effort and attainment is stronger than specific information about progress. Early in the term parents were invited to meet teachers to discuss the curriculum. Parents of Sixth Form students are welcome to discuss any issues with staff.

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

- 124 The headteacher has provided clear and very effective leadership for this school since the last inspection. She has sustained the focus on improving the quality of education and raising standards. Senior managers have very effectively supported her in this. There has been a very high level of classroom monitoring and supportive training to improve teaching.

### ***Main School (Years 7 to 11)***

- 125 The school has moved from the action plan from the last inspection to a clear well thought out development plan. The plan identifies clear goals and strategies for further improving the quality of education and raising standards as well as being costed with clear evaluation procedures. The plan has enabled effective curriculum development targeted at increasing the relevance of the curriculum for pupils, for example, the introduction of the complementary studies programme. However, in some subjects, such as mathematics, development planning is under-developed.
- 126 The senior managers evaluate the work of the school carefully, including the detailed analysis of attainment data. The school compares its performance with other schools, using both national data and data for similar schools. Managers use the information gained to identify weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum and then supportively manage improvements. Middle managers play their full part in this process of analysis but are not yet fully using the information gained to improve classroom practice still further. For example, attendance information is included with pupils' attainment data but the impact of low attendance is not shared with pupils.
- 127 The school has clear aims, which commit it to equality of access for all and to the improvement of standards. The school sets realistic and challenging targets for future pupil attainment. The setting of targets is based upon a wide range of assessment information and the targets set frequently exceed the predictions made from the data. Senior managers have a clear view of the development of the school over the next five years. The managers and teachers are fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of education and the standards that pupils attain. They have the capacity to

continue the significant improvements already achieved.

- 128 The governing body is very well informed and fully conversant with its roles and responsibilities. There is a very effective committee structure, which enables the governing body to manage its responsibilities and day-to-day work effectively. The budget is set appropriately against the development plan. Although a significant carry-forward of funds has built up over the last few years, due in part to the sale of land, the money is being used wisely to fund new buildings and resources. It is also well used to support the planned expansion of the Sixth Form. Governors also plan to use the funds to continue to improve the quality of education and the range of experiences pupils receive over the next few years.
- 129 Many governors are regular visitors to the school and several have attended in-service training for teachers as observers. They are well informed about the work of the school, its strengths and weaknesses. They have set appropriate priorities for the development of the school since the last inspection and have set the strategic direction for the continued development of the school. The governors overall impact on the work of the school is very much stronger than is usually found.
- 130 The governors' finance committee with support from senior staff, including administrative staff, set the budget carefully to meet the agreed targets for the school's development. The spending patterns are then monitored closely to ensure that the targets are being achieved. The financial control and administration are outstanding, with regular internal as well as external audits. Very effective use is made of information and communication technology to support financial processes and to provide accurate information for governors to monitor monthly. The school is following the four *best value* principles in its work. It successfully gives best value.
- 131 The school is making very effective use of additional resources from specific grants, especially those for building improvements.
- 132 The school has, through careful curriculum and financial planning, been able to recruit well-qualified and experienced staff over the last five years. At a time when teacher recruitment is difficult, this early planning and recruitment of staff reflects the efficiency and effectiveness of the senior managers of the school. This means that there are sufficient well-qualified teachers who are deployed effectively to use their expertise. There are a number of very effective support staff and teachers who support pupils with special educational needs individually, in small groups and in classrooms.
- 133 Management of special educational needs is good, the development plan is well thought out and is implemented strategically. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress against the key issue to improve the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs, in that learning targets are in place in English and history. The number of teachers and learning support assistants has increased significantly and the quality of teaching has improved, but the monitoring of how effectively subject teachers interact with special educational needs groups could be improved. The deployment of learning support assistants and specialist teachers into subject based work, rather than being attached to individual pupils is good practice

and is beginning to have an impact on raising standards. However, as this system is still in its infancy in some areas, for example mathematics, it has not yet resulted in raising standards in all subject areas. Information and communication technology is used effectively to track pupils' progress in literacy, but is not fully in place for the other subjects.

- 134 The school is housed in a range of buildings which provide for all specialist subject needs, although the science accommodation is now becoming over-stretched by the increasing numbers of pupils. The school is well looked after and provides a welcoming learning environment. There are good outdoor social areas and a good range of outdoor sports facilities. The school is seeking to develop more links with the community to extend the use of the school's facilities.
- 135 There are good learning resources recently enhanced by the installation of *interactive white boards* in a number of classrooms. The school has large numbers of computers, which are accessible to most teachers and pupils to support the work in their subjects. In some subjects the planned development of resources is insufficiently focussed, for example, in mathematics limited text book resources are reducing the effectiveness of classroom work.

## ***Sixth Form***

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

- 136 The Sixth Form is managed as an integral part of the whole school. It is identified appropriately within development planning and other aspects of whole school management including the budget. The development of the Sixth Form is seen as a major part of the continued development of the school over the next five years. It has featured as a major part of the development over the last six years and is on course to meet the target of over 200 students by 2002.
- 137 The development of the Sixth Form has required a major commitment from senior managers to ensure that a good range of courses is available to students and that they are staffed by well-qualified specialist teachers. The head of Sixth Form is a member of the senior management team and as such is fully involved in the management of the whole school.
- 138 The senior managers and governors have set clear and appropriate targets for the future development of the Sixth Form and there is a strong commitment and capacity to carry this through.
- 139 The quality of teaching observed in the Sixth Form during this inspection shows the high quality of the teachers and the effective development of their skills. This was shown, for example, by the skilled use of the recently installed *interactive white boards* by several teachers; and their use significantly increased the pace of learning and the depth of students' understanding.
- 140 Governors are very well informed and have a clear understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses in the Sixth Form. They have a good understanding of the

forthcoming changes to the funding of Sixth Forms.

- 141 The school monitors Sixth Form performance in detail using a range of comparative data. The internal monitoring is strong and provides a wide range of information. However, heads of department do not always identify the key issues from the data. For example, results are analysed against students' attendance rates but strategies to monitor and support individual students with attendance difficulties have yet to be implemented in most subjects.
- 142 The school and governors have established exemplary systems of financial control and administration, which makes good use of modern technology. The money available for the Sixth Form is used effectively and efficiently ensuring that the principles of *best value* are fully met. Managers, with the increased size of the Sixth Form, are now evaluating the cost effectiveness of individual courses and will use the information to inform future development. The Sixth Form is cost effective and gives good value for money.

### ***Resources***

- 143 There are sufficient well-qualified teachers to deliver the Sixth Form curriculum. They have good resources for both teaching and learning and generally accommodation is good, but there is considerable pressure on the specialist science accommodation.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

144 In order to sustain the recent improvements in the school and to further raise standards governors and senior managers should:

- i) Develop the roles of heads of department and those with pastoral responsibility to improve classroom practice still further by:
  - Developing more specific short-term targets for pupils' and students' learning.  
[23, 57, 110, 193, 210, 254]
  - Improving the consistency of teachers' marking.  
[41, 49, 102, 163, 178, 221, 229, 239]
  - Making more effective use of monitoring information.  
[102, 104, 126, 201, 202, 258, 290, 330, 339]

145 The governors may also wish to consider the following issues which inspectors identified as a minor weaknesses:

- The use of the science laboratory accommodation.  
[143, 193, 315]
- The organisation of the school day to address the loss of lesson time due to movement on the large site.  
[72]

### *Sixth Form*

146 In order to sustain the recent improvements in the school and to further raise standards governors and senior managers should:

- i) Provide more information and advice for Sixth Form students about school Sixth Form courses, further and higher education.  
[36, 71, 91, 113, 118, 120, 121,122, 123]
- ii) Involve students more in target setting.  
[23, 57, 110, 216, 309, 315, 338]
- iii) Develop procedures for early intervention when students are having difficulties.  
[89, 109, 141, 315, 321]
- iv) Evaluate the impact on standards of students' absence from lessons.  
[35, 107, 141]



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	178
	Sixth form	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		51

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	0	32	75	65	6	0	0
Percentage	0	18	42	36	3	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	13	15	15	1	0	0
Percentage	4	28	33	33	2	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the Sixth Form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1159	142
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	203	-

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	145	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.7
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	113	114	227

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	76	70
	Girls	96	80	69
	Total	172	156	139
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (72)	69 (57)	61 (53)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (39)	34 (35)	27 (24)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	73	69
	Girls	87	80	67
	Total	151	153	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (55)	67 (62)	60 (51)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (27)	33 (32)	24 (22)
	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	62	57	119

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	10	45	55
	Girls	19	53	55
	Total	29	98	110
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	24 (33)	82 (80)	92 (92)
	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	29 (28)
	National	38.4 (38)

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	0
	National	n/a

**Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13)**

**Separate male and female results are not given because of the small numbers involved.**

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	n/a	n/a	13

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	n/a	n/a	15.8 (17.0)	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

*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	13	15.4
	National		n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		76.5

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1190
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	10	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	112	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	75.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	501

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	22.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Financial information***

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	3,092,601
Total expenditure	3,605,998
Expenditure per pupil	2,973
Balance brought forward from previous year	1,523,421
Balance carried forward to next year	1,010,024

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1211
Number of questionnaires returned	935

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	59	9	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	30	57	4	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	52	5	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	49	12	3	10
The teaching is good.	32	58	4	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	49	14	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	44	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	50	14	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	46	46	3	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	53	5	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	48	8	2	12

**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 **sound**.

#### Strengths

- Standards in English at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are improving.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils, manage behaviour effectively and create a very positive atmosphere for learning in lessons.
- Pupils are very well behaved, have good attitudes to the subject, and respond well to work set.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management.

#### Areas for improvement

- In some lessons teachers need to provide higher levels of challenge through more detailed planning and more careful structuring of learning activities.
- Marking needs to be used more consistently to tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work and to guide teaching.

- 147 The inspection evidence comprised the observation of 11 lessons at Key Stage 3, the observation of 14 lessons at Key Stage 4, the review of a representative sample of pupils' exercise books and folders, a discussion with the head of department and a review of departmental documentation.
- 148 In the 2000 National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9, 76% of pupils attained Level 5 or above. This was above the national average, and well above average for schools of a similar type. Girls on average did better than boys, which was similar to the national picture. However, there has not been a consistent pattern over time of boys doing less well than girls. Results in 2001 declined, with 64% of pupils attaining Level 5 or above. These results were close to standards achieved nationally and were also close to the school's teachers' assessments for this year group. Despite the recent decline in test results, standards show clear improvement since the last inspection.
- 149 Work seen during the inspection provides further evidence that overall standards have improved since the last inspection and are now at least comparable with those found nationally. It is due to teaching which promotes sound, and sometimes good, learning. The impact of effective teaching on pupils' progress was shown in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher's clearly focussed planning, high expectations and use of challenging questions enabled pupils to gain a good understanding of the techniques Shakespeare uses to establish atmosphere and character in *Macbeth*. Overall the progress made by pupils from Years 7-9 is satisfactory.
- 150 In recent years, results in the GCSE examinations in English have also improved significantly, although they are still below the national average. In 2000, 33% of pupils gained an A\*-C grade in English. This was well below the national figure. Girls gained better results than boys. This difference in attainment was broadly the same as the difference that occurred nationally. However, a relatively high proportion



of boys gained the lower grades. In 2001 pupils did much better, with 48% of the pupils gaining an A\*- C grade. These results exceeded the improvement targets for English set by the school. Overall boys again did less well than girls.

- 151 GCSE results in English literature have varied in recent years and have remained below the national average. In the 2000 examinations, 46% of pupils entered for this subject gained an A\*-C grade. This was significantly below the national average. The percentage of pupils entered for this examination was also significantly below the national average. Girls out-performed boys by a wide margin. In the 2001 examinations, results in English literature improved, with 54% of pupils gaining A\*-C grades. Boys did much better than in the previous year, though still slightly less well than girls.
- 152 Work seen in lessons and in the review of pupils' exercise books did not reveal a significant difference in the overall attainment of boys and of girls currently in the school. A significant number of boys who took their GCSE examinations in 2000 and some who took their examinations in 2001 showed negative attitudes to reading. In both years several boys failed to comply with examination requirements, which had a detrimental effect on overall grades. Overall progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
- 153 By the end of Year 9, in speaking and listening most pupils convey opinions clearly and make constructive comments when in small groups. Reflecting their teachers' expectations of behaviour which are consistently high, the great majority of pupils listen carefully. This was evident in almost all of the lessons observed. However, many pupils do not speak confidently in front of the whole class, remaining too quiet during whole-class question and answer sessions. When they do provide spoken answers their contributions are usually very brief. In some lessons this is because teachers do not provide sufficient encouragement to everyone to have a go or to extend their answers.
- 154 By the end of Year 11, in their speaking and listening pupils frequently make comments which take account of other people's views and which help to move the discussion forward. This is particularly the case when they are discussing ideas in small groups. On occasion they adapt their spoken language to different social contexts. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson where, reflecting an imaginative and well controlled approach adopted by the teacher, pupils used role-play effectively to prepare for the writing of a letter of complaint to a travel agent. However, many pupils still do not make extended contributions to whole-class question and answer sessions.
- 155 The majority of pupils read aloud with accuracy. Some read with fluency and expression. This was seen in the lesson on *Macbeth* where a number of pupils volunteered to act out a scene. Several brought out the dramatic qualities of a difficult text through a reading which was confident and expressive. However, the reading aloud of many pupils is rather flat. The review of work in exercise books showed that pupils often give personal responses to their reading and at best refer to specific aspects of language, structure and character to support their opinions.

- 156 In their reading, by the end of Year 11 pupils are able to give considered and often insightful responses to texts read. This was revealed in the review of pupils' work. For example, teachers had provided effective opportunities for Year 10 pupils to respond imaginatively to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Pupils had produced newspaper articles describing major incidents from the novel, revealing a good awareness of theme and character. Some pupils are able to use a range of technical terms with confidence. However, a significant number of pupils do not demonstrate an understanding of more challenging literary approaches and techniques and have difficulty responding to literature in ways which are more analytical and discursive.
- 157 The review of pupils' work showed that by the end of Year 9 many pupils produce a good range of writing, including stories, personal and formal letters, explanations, discussions and critical responses to literature. Much of this writing is engaging, with some pupils demonstrating a clear style and using a range of sentence structures for effect. The writing of many pupils is reasonably well controlled in terms of straightforward spelling, punctuation and grammar. Standards of presentation are generally high. However, the written work of lower attaining pupils is generally more limited in range. To a significant extent this is the result of the use in some lessons of language exercises which do not provide sufficient levels of challenge. The writing of lower attaining pupils contains numerous basic errors of spelling and punctuation.
- 158 Overall, pupils literacy skills are developed effectively. They have opportunities to enhance these skills in subjects such as history where good use of specialist vocabulary is encouraged.
- 159 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This is due in large measure to the effectively targeted support provided through the withdrawal programme. For example, in a lesson with a Year 8 group the teacher provided carefully structured, varied and highly effective teaching strategies that enabled pupils to make very good progress in learning specific spelling patterns. Some effective teaching of pupils with special educational needs within the main English curriculum also contributes to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
- 160 Teaching within the department is sound. It is rarely less than satisfactory, and on numerous occasions it is good. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They have high expectations of behaviour and manage that behaviour effectively. The very positive atmosphere for learning that teachers create in their lessons has a direct bearing on pupils' attitudes. These are generally very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Year 10 and 11. Reflecting a clear sense of order and purpose in the vast majority of lessons, pupils show interest in the work, and concentrate well. In some lessons, teachers exploit these conditions for learning to provide pupils with a good level of challenge. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher's high expectations, effective management and skill in encouraging everyone to contribute to whole-class discussion were important factors in helping pupils to acquire a good understanding of the language and imagery used by Charles Dickens in his short story, *The Signalman*. In response to the teacher's approach pupils were highly motivated, they participated well and made good progress in their learning.

- 161 Pupils often develop their knowledge and understanding through well-structured group work which is combined with an appropriate level of teacher guidance. This also helps to foster their independent learning. Such work was seen in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were comparing theme, plot and character in two short stories. The teacher structured the groups carefully, ensuring a range of abilities in each and allocating tasks to pupils in a way that matched their learning needs. The pupils responded well to this work and were able to gain a clear understanding of the authors' literary approaches.
- 162 However, strengths in some lessons are balanced by shortcomings. Work is sometimes not sufficiently well planned and structured to provide pupils with consistently high levels of challenge. In some lessons teachers spend too much time on whole-class question and answer even though only a few pupils are contributing and may be addressing issues superficially. Teachers sometimes do not strike the right balance between independent group work and the need for structured support. For example, where pupils are provided with opportunities to analyse texts in small groups, teachers sometimes do not subsequently ensure that any gaps in their learning are addressed quickly and systematically. Sometimes key learning points are not reinforced strongly enough. Where they occur, these shortcomings in lesson planning and structure sometimes mean that by the end of the lesson pupils have not understood the work as thoroughly as they could have done.
- 163 Marking is often, though not always, conscientiously done. In the review of pupils' written work, examples were seen of thorough and constructive marking which supports learning. However, in many cases marking does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Often the teacher's identification of errors does not focus on specific learning points. Teachers' written summary comments in many cases relate to effort only and do not pay appropriate attention to achievement. Some marking is superficial. Opportunities to use marking to guide teaching and help pupils learn more effectively are therefore frequently lost.
- 164 Leadership and management provided by the head of department are good. The departmental handbook provides a clear framework for further improvement in quality of provision and in standards. Targets for action have been agreed. The department has implemented systems for evaluating its work. These systems include careful monitoring of standards in pupils' exercise books and the analysis of assessment data at the end of Years 9 and 11. They also include the monitoring of teaching through the observation of lessons. These features underpin the department's developing culture of improvement and promote the further development of the effective teaching seen in a number of lessons. The recently established departmental management structure also supports these developments.
- 165 The last inspection highlighted the need for teachers to use marking to support pupils' learning and the need for the department to review the over-use of language exercises for some pupils. These issues need further attention. Progress on other issues raised in the last inspection has been good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### Strengths

- There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Standards of attainment have improved significantly across both Key Stages as a direct result of good management, an improvement in the quality of teaching and positive pupils attitudes.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory.
- The monitoring role of the head of department needs further development in order to ensure a more consistent approach in some aspects of teaching, for example, marking and the use of information and communication technology and in sharing in-house expertise.
- Department development planning is not setting clear priorities for development or processes by which they will be achieved.
- Resources in mathematics are unsatisfactory.

166 In all 21 lessons of mathematics were observed, the work of six pupils from each year group was scrutinised and discussions held with the head of department.

167 Attainment in national tests has improved significantly at both key stages since the last inspection. Though it is not possible to directly compare results for the school with provisional national results for 2001, it is likely that results are broadly in line with national averages.

168 At Key Stage 3, the average points score is in line with national averages and the number of pupils attaining a Level 5 or above is in line with national averages. Over the period 1997 to 2000, improvement in results has been better than national trends.

169 At Key Stage 4, pupils were attaining results which were well below national averages and results in 2000 indicated that attainment was still below national averages and that boys were performing worse than girls. Performance of boys has improved significantly in the 2001 results as a result of a variety of departmental strategies and now there is little difference between the results of boys and girls. Results for 2001 indicate that attainment is likely to be in line with national averages. When compared to other core subjects, mathematics and science have similar results but the English results are better.

170 By the age of 14, standards of work seen in books, lessons and through discussions are in line with what are typically expected of pupils of this age. There is no significant difference between the work of girls or boys. Pupils show confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. Year 9 pupils are confident and competent in using number and are able, for example, to use their knowledge of number to devise a strategy to always win when playing a number game. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils can plot shapes on a graph and apply their knowledge of symmetry to complex problems. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 8 confidently use digital and analogue to describe different types of clocks and can write the time with increasing

accuracy, converting from one time to another. Some Year 9 pupils have high level graphical skills and are able to plot two different pieces of information and spot if the information is linked in any way.

- 171 By the age of 16, standards of work seen in books, lessons and through discussions are in line with what are typically expected of pupils of this age. A higher attaining Year 11 class was able to carry out analysis of complex information in order to compare different sets of data. Year 10 pupils show increasing skills in algebra, manipulate equations and use them to solve problems. Low attaining Year 10 pupils show clear gains in knowledge and understanding of numbers and are able to add and subtract decimals competently when solving problems. In shape work, Year 11 pupils are able to calculate the lengths of sides of triangles in practical situations, for example, to work out the lengths of sides needed when making a water ski slope to get the correct angle for the jump. There is no significant difference between the standard of mathematics of girls or boys. However, the standards of presentation in the books of some boys, particularly in lower attaining groups, is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor.
- 172 Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Most pupils make clear gains in knowledge and understanding of all topics. They show good understanding of number and can apply their skills confidently. Higher attaining pupils are able to use algebra confidently and competently to solve problems. Low attaining pupils gather information and draw graphs of increasing complexity. Pupils understand the properties of shape, developing skills on area and volume with increasingly complex shapes. In some lessons, where teaching is very good, thorough planning, a good pace to lessons and close monitoring of work ensure that pupils waste no time and make better than satisfactory progress. However, inconsistencies in teaching mean that achievement and progress is only satisfactory overall.
- 173 Overall, pupils' numeracy skills are developed appropriately. In a number of subjects of the curriculum pupils have opportunities to use their skills. For example, in Year 11 science when they collect data on acceleration and their calculations enable them to draw appropriate conclusions.
- 174 By the age of 14, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. However, the attainment and progress of older pupils is unsatisfactory overall, where work is not always appropriate. In particular a lack of emphasis on language development, insufficient use is made of assessment information to guide curriculum planning, to set clear targets and to diagnose the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- 175 The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection where almost one third of teaching was unsatisfactory. Though there were two unsatisfactory lessons observed, teaching in general is mostly good and often very good.
- 176 The department is staffed with well qualified staff and teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are at least good. Where teaching is good, teachers explain the content of the lesson clearly; what pupils are to learn, and how the lesson

fits into a sequence of lessons on the topic. Planning is thorough and caters for the range of ability in the set, with easier work for lower attaining pupils and challenging extension work for the higher attaining pupils. Good use is made of the *interactive whiteboards* to enhance the teaching and learning, keeping the lesson moving forward at a pace. Pupils are involved in the lesson and develop their speaking and listening skills when explaining to the class how they tackle problems. Teachers' questions are targeted carefully to check understanding and at the level of the particular pupil. Whilst pupils are working, teachers monitor their work, picking up any problems as they arise and stopping the group to explain where necessary. Marking is thorough, picking up errors and showing ways to improve. Discipline is good and any instances of misbehaviour are quickly stopped. Very high standards of behaviour are expected in almost all lessons. These teaching strategies ensure pupils waste little time in lessons, pick up ideas quickly, that the work is interesting and learning is maximised.

- 177 In lessons which are not so good, planning lacks detail and does not include work specifically for low or higher attaining pupils. Insufficient use is made of assessment to find out what pupils understand and as a result some of the work is too difficult. Pupils have no short term targets to give them an incentive to learn, and they have little opportunity to develop their mathematical language. All do the same work. Computers and the *interactive whiteboards* are not used so effectively to enhance the teaching and learning. Pupils have few opportunities to contribute in lessons. High standards of behaviour are not always expected. Marking is superficial, with a significant amount of work not marked and few comments on ways to improve or on careless and untidy work.
- 178 At Key Stage 4, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils is unsatisfactory overall. In some lessons, all pupils do the same work. Assessment is not used effectively to identify both group and individual weaknesses and devise learning programmes to tackle these weaknesses. As a result, some topics are inappropriate. When talking to pupils it was obvious that in some topics they had little understanding of underlying mathematical ideas. For example, a group of pupils could multiply decimals by ten and a hundred accurately, but didn't understand what a decimal was, or the value of the digits in decimal numbers. Short term, meaningful targets are not set for either mathematical achievement or for presentation of work. Little use is made of computers. Mathematical language is not developed, for example, by focussing on key words for the topic. Marking is often superficial, with few comments on ways to improve including poor presentation. There are no structured behaviour management strategies employed to help pupils with behavioural problems. Some texts are old and inappropriate, with an over emphasis on reading skills. These pupils make unsatisfactory progress as a result.
- 179 By contrast, however, most pupils enjoy mathematics and many are very enthusiastic and have good levels of concentration. This positive attitude has a positive impact on the quality of work.
- 180 Overall, the leadership of the department is good. A variety of strategies have been employed which have had a significant positive impact on the standards of teaching and the attainment of almost all pupils except older pupils with special educational needs.

- 181 Resources in mathematics are unsatisfactory overall. Although there are new *interactive whiteboards* in several rooms, other computer systems are out of date and unreliable and pupils cannot get the necessary access to computers on a day-to-day basis to enhance their learning. Software is limited. Book resources are barely adequate, with some pupils having to share in lessons, and some books are old and out-of-date. The monitoring role of the head of department is not sufficiently developed and as a result there are inconsistencies in teaching, for example in the quality of planning or marking. Departmental development planning is weak. There are no detailed long-term plans to systematically address issues such as the use of computers.
- 182 Despite these areas in need of improvement, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Two key areas have improved. The standard of teaching is much better and a range of strategies have been employed to raise standards of attainment significantly.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning have improved considerably since the last inspection.
- Pupils' attainment at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 has risen significantly.
- There have been improvements in the assessment of pupils and the tracking of pupils' progress over time.
- The department is well resourced and these resources are effectively used to enhance the teaching of science.
- Information and communication technology is well used to support learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning, by ensuring that all teaching provides appropriate challenges for pupils and that pupils are given more opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Monitoring of teaching to ensure that best practice is shared so that teaching and learning continues to improve.
- The target setting process so that pupils understand their current level of attainment and what they need to do to improve.
- Management of laboratories to ensure that specialist accommodation is shared equitably amongst all classes and their teachers.

- 183 During the inspection nineteen lessons or part lessons were observed. Pupils' written work was scrutinised and discussions were held with staff and pupils. In addition, schemes of work and other documents relating to science provision were studied.
- 184 Standards at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages. The results of Key Stage 3 tests in both 2000 and 2001 were close to national averages in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above. There has been a trend of improvement over time and results are now significantly better than five years ago. When compared with scores for similar schools the results

are above average.

- 185 At Key Stage 4 there has also been a trend of continuing improvement over the last five years and the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in 2001 was close to the national average. This represents a significant increase compared with the results for 2000 when the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average.
- 186 Observations of pupils' work during the inspection confirm that standards of attainment at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are typical of those normally found and are improving. By Year 9 most pupils have a good understanding of basic science concepts such as the difference between elements, compounds and mixtures. Most pupils are able to carry out simple practical investigations, evaluate the results and come to appropriate conclusions. For example, pupils in Year 8 successfully carried out an investigation into the effect of insulation on heat loss.
- 187 At Key Stage 4 most pupils have a good grasp of the science concepts contained within the required syllabuses. For example, pupils in Year 10 showed good understanding of the reaction of metals with air and water and the fact that some metals are more reactive than others. Most pupils are able to carry out more sophisticated investigations, observe and measure results and come to conclusions. For example, a Year 11 class successfully used light gates to investigate the way in which the acceleration of a vehicle on an air track varies with the angle of a slope.
- 188 Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are being developed appropriately in science. At both key stages pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress relative to their ability and often make good progress. There is no significant variation between the achievement of boys and girls.
- 189 Pupil behaviour is very good. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are well motivated to succeed. Most pupils show interest in their work, are able to sustain concentration and persevere to complete tasks. Pupils behave responsibly and safely, treating equipment with respect. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils co-operate well with each other and share ideas, resources and tasks.
- 190 Overall, teaching is good. Ten out of eleven lessons seen at Key Stage 3 were judged to be satisfactory or better and six were good or better. At Key Stage 4 all lessons seen were satisfactory or better and a half of these were good or better. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and employ effective methods of teaching. They manage pupils well and use resources effectively to support learning. For example, the use of an *interactive whiteboard* greatly enhanced learning in a Year 10 lesson on electrolysis and in another on velocity and acceleration in Year 11. The pace of lessons is good and the great majority of pupils work productively for the whole lesson. Teachers use questions well to elicit pupils' knowledge and understanding and give constructive feedback to pupils during lessons. Marking is both regular and thorough and provides guidance on ways to improve work. Homework is used well to extend and consolidate class-work. As a consequence of good teaching, pupils, including those with special educational needs, acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at least as rapidly as might be expected and often more



rapidly than expected. However, some lessons are very teacher-directed with little opportunity for pupils to work independently of the teacher and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on plant and animal cells, pupils largely acted as passive recipients of knowledge and had little opportunity to find out information for themselves.

- 191 Assessment is generally good and is used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work and guide pupils towards improvement. In addition assessment results are effectively used to track pupils' progress over time. However, pupils do not always have good knowledge of their own learning in terms of the levels they have achieved and what they need to do to reach higher levels. In this respect the target setting process is not yet sufficiently refined to enable pupils and teachers to jointly set the targets. The quality of information given to parents in end of year reports is insufficiently detailed for parents to know what their child needs to do, in specific terms, to improve.
- 192 The science curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is broad and balanced and there is equality of access. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow a course of study which is broadly based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) exemplar scheme. At Key Stage 4 all pupils follow the Dual Award GCSE Science Course. Extracurricular activities such as the astronomy and science clubs further enhance learning opportunities. A recently launched science department web-site supports pupils in accessing the science curriculum, provides useful guidance and encourages wider use of information and communication technology to support science learning.
- 193 Overall, leadership and management of science are sound. The department handbook and schemes of work provide detailed and constructive guidance to teachers to assist them in their work. The development of resources such as the department CD-ROM and web-site and the introduction of interactive whiteboard technology have improved teaching and learning and have the potential to bring about significant further improvement. Monitoring and analysis of pupils' performance is rigorous and departmental development planning is strong. The department is well resourced. Weaknesses exist in the setting of targets with pupils and in the monitoring of teaching to improve the quality. The shortage of laboratory accommodation is a serious cause for concern. The allocation of teachers to science rooms has not been well managed by the department and has resulted in the current inequitable situation where some classes spend a considerable part of their science timetable in classrooms.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is now **good** following a period of decline since the last inspection.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is mainly good.
- Pupils' response in art and design is very good in all years at both key stages and excellent in the Sixth Form.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have improved and numbers of pupils and students taking examinations in art at GCSE and at A/S and A level have increased significantly.
- The department is committed to maintaining the improving trend and securing higher levels of achievement.
- Shared planning and teamwork are good and helping to raise standards and levels of attainment.

### Areas for improvement

- Increasing the levels of challenge for pupils and students at all key stages in order to further improve their rate of progress.
- Improving pupils' access to the work of others through the use of artists in residence, visits to galleries and other places of cultural interest, in order to inspire pupils and students to be even more creative and inventive in their art.
- Developing and extending analysis of examination results and monitoring of assessment.

194 The subject continues to meet statutory requirements for art and design at Key Stage 3. GCSE art and design at Key Stage 4 has become an increasingly popular subject and consequently A/S and A-level courses have become popular and continue to enjoy an increase in student numbers.

195 In the 2001 GCSE examinations, 66% of pupils gained grades A\*-C. This is in line with the provisional figures for the national average. This is a significant increase on the previous three years where the results have been consistently well below the national average. More girls than boys took the subject but there is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

196 In the work seen during the inspection pupils overall by the end of Key Stage 3 are now achieving standards that are securely in line with those expected for their age. This is a consequence of the department's focus upon the teaching of mark-making, the application of the visual elements such as line, tone, pattern, shape, form and the progressive development of observational skills across the key stage. Pupils have increasing access to working in both textiles and three dimensions in a variety of media such as wood, plaster bandage, papier-mâché, cane and card. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to create interesting textile designs, record from first-hand observations with some accuracy and a confident use of media. Higher and middle attaining pupils are able to apply with some discrimination, a variety of shading and modelling techniques to create robust three-dimensional forms and shapes. They exhibit an increasing knowledge of the work of other artists, designers and the art of other cultures through their homework projects. These projects are well presented,

good quality productions, of a high standard. They are produced mostly at home, often using a combination of information and communication technology skills through the use of the CD-ROM and the Internet and other art techniques and materials. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving similar levels of attainment to those of other pupils. This is good.

- 197 From the work seen during the inspection attainment by the age of 16 is broadly in line with a national average. Pupils in Year 11 exhibit increasingly accurate and skilful application of observation recording skills. Their research and investigative skills are employed with growing confidence and understanding. Pupils in Year 10 are able to apply basic skills and a knowledge of composition and design, that have their foundation at Key Stage 3, to create graphic images, and textile designs that are often inspired and motivated by the work of other artists and designers.
- 198 Access to the work of others through the use of artists in residence, visits to galleries and other places of cultural interest in order to explore ideas, methods and techniques and less familiar media is limited so reducing the impact upon pupils' creative and inventive potential in this subject.
- 199 Pupils respond very well to their time in art and design. Attitudes in all years at both key stages are very good and are excellent at in the Sixth Form. Very good behaviour, a keenness to learn and achieve enhance progress. Pupils exhibit a pride in their work, a respect for the work of each other and respond very well to their teachers. Consequently the department makes a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils as they progress through the school.
- 200 The quality of teaching is good overall. Lesson planning is sound and effective. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject that is used to plan projects, provide effective demonstrations and maintain the interest and enthusiasm of pupils and students. This ensures that pupils make good progress. Consequently, pupils are attentive, motivated and are able to enjoy their time in art and design and eagerly engage in the practical work. Pupils appreciate the high level of individual support in lessons, which is always positive and encouraging. Lessons are always productive and usually conducted at a good pace. The use of homework to extend the learning is very good.
- 201 The quality of learning is mainly good and is a consequence of the shared planning which ensures that pupils are able to build upon their prior attainment. These opportunities enable pupils to progressively develop basic skills and apply these with increasing confidence. Teachers are able to enthuse pupils so that they readily engage in their art and design and are eager to do their best. The use of on going support and monitoring is a regular feature in lessons. The structures for formal assessment are good and in place. Pupils enter the school with a range of experiences and the quality of teaching enables pupils of all ages and abilities to make good progress. However, a more focussed monitoring of the results of assessing progress and attainment would give pupils a greater sense of the how they are doing and what they can do to improve even further.
- 202 The department is now well led. Stimulating displays of work, used to inform and inspire pupils, cover the walls of studios and nearby corridors and stairwells. The

subject has direction, documentation is thorough and studios are well managed. The collaborative management style makes best use of the existing strengths of teachers. Attention is increasingly focussed upon raising attainment. This has been mostly well met and is evidenced in the recent GCSE results. However, the analysis of results at GCSE and at A-level in order to promote raised standards is under developed.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The enthusiasm and determination of the staff to raise standards across the school.
- Staff expertise in a wide range of materials and manufacturing processes.
- The quality of the accommodation and resources now available.

### Areas for improvement

- Examination results at GCSE.
- Lesson content at Key Stage 3 so as to provide more opportunities to stretch the most able and place more emphasis on design.

203 This is a satisfactory and improving department. A series of initiatives to improve the quality of provision is currently being implemented in a concerted attempt to raise standards at GCSE. It should be noted that immediately prior to the inspection the departmental workshops were substantially refurbished, causing an extended period of disruption during the year 2000-2001.

204 The curriculum offered by the department meets statutory requirements and is sufficiently broad and balanced. Pupils work in a wide variety of materials and disciplines, including wood, metal, plastics, control technologies, graphics, food and information and communication technology. For example, during the inspection a Year 9 group designed and cast a pewter brooch while a Year 8 group made decorated iced cakes.

205 At the end of Key Stage 3 in June 2001, according to teachers' assessments, the majority of pupils achieved national averages for the subject, though the number achieving higher levels was below national averages. The work observed during the visit reflected these standards although it suggests that skills in making are higher than in designing.

206 At GCSE school records for 2001 show that the A\* to C% pass rate across all design and technology subjects improved considerably from 2000, when pass rates were substantially below national averages. The overall results still remain below national averages however. Provisional results for 2001 in graphic products and food technology indicate above average results, while those in systems and control remain below average, and resistant materials significantly below average.

207 From work seen and lessons observed in Years 10 and 11, standards in practical work are at least typical of those expected. Pupils work with care and accuracy to make products such as a three-dimensional decorative device that incorporates moving

parts, or packaging for an Easter egg. While the work of the best pupils shows a good grasp of the design and manufacturing issues, many pupils are not yet sufficiently confident in these aspects.

- 208 In order to address this weakness there is scope for more coverage of design and manufacturing to be introduced within the current Key Stage 3 scheme of work. For example, when making one-off products such as a storage box, opportunities were missed in a Year 8 lesson for pupils to consider of how it could be designed for a particular use and market, and how jigs and templates might be used to manufacture it in quantity.
- 209 Pupils are very keen and willing to learn. They make good progress in lessons, and across the key stages. They concentrate throughout lessons and work at a lively pace. Their attitudes and behaviour in workshops are very good. They co-operate fully in sharing tools and materials and in assisting each other.
- 210 Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 it is often good and at Key Stage 3 sometimes good. Lessons are very well organised and managed, and pupils are given clear and precise instructions. Expectations of standards in practical work are high. Working relationships with pupils are good, and dialogue is positive. However, the most able are often not sufficiently challenged to develop and stretch their capacity for independent problem-solving. At Key Stage 3, explicit connections between the material areas are not made frequently enough to ensure that pupils gain a sufficiently holistic understanding of the subject. While pupils' work is regularly marked, the current target-setting scheme often fails to provide pupils with enough specific guidance as to how they can improve their performance.
- 211 After a period of considerable disruption the department now has a very well-resourced suite of workshops well matched to the needs of the curriculum. There has been a considerable and potentially effective investment in resources for information and communication technology resourcing.
- 212 The head of department provides strong leadership and support, and is clearly highly committed to raising standards in the subject across the school. He has instigated a wide range of initiatives to achieve this. Monitoring of the policies of the department is currently carried out informally by the head of department.
- 213 When compared to the previous report, the department appears to have only made limited progress. During this time however there have been extensive staff changes, expansion in numbers and the disruption of a major refurbishment. Provision for the subject has therefore substantially improved since the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### Strengths

- The good quality and variety of styles of teaching.
- The good subject leadership and strong support which encourages teachers to experiment and provide stimulating lessons.
- The very good relationships in most lessons which enables the teachers to challenge the pupils.
- The very good resources and accommodation which are put to effective use.

### Areas for improvement

- Awareness in lesson planning of the requirements of the National Curriculum, in order to ensure that lessons are pitched appropriately to further raise standards.
- The match of some of the work to the needs of the full range of pupils.
- The setting of subject specific targets for pupils.
- The use of marking to improve the information to pupils about their progress against their targets.

- 214 Standards reached by pupils at both ages 14 and 16 have fluctuated over recent years, but are generally improving at a slightly faster rate than nationally. In the year 2000, pupils aged 14 were assessed by their teachers to be working close to the level expected of similar pupils. Those aged 16 attained at a level below the national average for GCSE geography. When compared to the whole school results, however, they had performed at a higher level than their average in other subjects. Boys performance is well below that of girls and the gap exceeds that found nationally. In the year 2001 geography results show similar trends and detail, but are a big improvement on those for 2000.
- 215 Standards observed in lessons and in pupils' work samples are slightly better than those indicated by the recent assessment and examination results. A majority of pupils aged 11 to 14 demonstrate suitable levels of attainment when describing the patterns of world features such as volcanoes and earthquakes. They achieve equally well when describing and explaining the processes involved and when linking the impact of such hazards on the people living nearby. There is a good build up of geographical skills so that from the earliest lessons pupils identify local features on aerial photographs, handle atlases with confidence and extract and transfer information from a variety of sources.
- 216 From the age of 14 to 16, pupils build effectively on these skills so that their coursework projects reach a high standard. They are able to pose suitable questions about urban areas and gather a good range of evidence to back up the points they make. From samples of work seen, however, it is clear that not enough pupils work successfully at the higher order skills, and the self-evaluation of their work is a weaker aspect. In lessons most pupils handle the concepts of urbanisation well. They use their prior learning to help explain new information and a few make very perceptive observations about what is presented to them. A weakness in general geographical background knowledge hampers progress in some lessons.
- 217 Overall teaching is good. Teachers are working hard on developing the variety and quality of lessons, and observations reflect the success of this. There is no doubt that

this emphasis on teaching has contributed to the recent higher standards. Lessons are well planned and the use of resources such as the *interactive whiteboards*, internet materials, photographs and a planned mix of text books motivates the pupils and enables effective learning. The use of fieldwork adds further high quality variety. Teachers involve all pupils well using effective questioning and this gives many the confidence to contribute, some with extended answers.

- 218 Pupils are therefore involved in their learning in many active ways and this helps to ensure that learning is effective and that satisfactory progress is made. Learning objectives are now being more closely linked to the assessment requirements of the National Curriculum, but there is as yet a lack of attention to the detail of these requirements; and some lessons are pitched slightly below where they ought to be. The setting arrangements have helped to ensure that pupils' needs are met, but there are some instances when pupils find the work inappropriate and they drift off task.
- 219 Despite these few exceptions, attitudes to learning are generally very good. The great majority of pupils enjoy their learning in geography, they work well in groups and pairs when asked to do so, and there are instances where pupils demonstrate great pride in what they have achieved. The department works hard to ensure that every opportunity is taken to reflect upon and develop the pupils' awareness of world issues. Pupils respond with sensitivity. The very few instances of poorer behaviour in lessons are well managed and most pupils return quickly to work. The one area of frustration for the department is the attitude displayed by a small number of 15-year-old pupils who fail to meet deadlines for their coursework. Measures are in place to help address this where possible.
- 220 The department is well led and this has enabled teachers to feel confident enough to adopt the new teaching strategies. Resource levels are good and the new accommodation enables the strong sense of team to become evident through an excellent visual display that defines the geography suite and enhances learning.
- 221 Assessment information from the marking of pupils' work is not consistent nor is it used sufficiently to plan the work they should do or to set targets for pupil attainment.
- 222 Since the last inspection the subject has made good progress. All of the issues raised have been addressed with the exception of the need for greater consistency in the quality of marking.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good; many teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- The history curriculum at Key Stage 3 is well planned and ensures a high degree of consistency across all classes in terms of what is to be taught.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Most lessons are taught in stimulating and well equipped classrooms.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of pace and challenge in a few lessons.
- There is a lack of consistency and moderation when assessing what pupils know and can do in Years 7 to 9.
- The assessment and performance data available to the department is not used to set meaningful targets for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- There are few systems in place to enable the subject leader to monitor and evaluate the work of the department and so identify what needs to be done to raise standards further.

223 Standards indicated by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2000 were below national averages. Boys did less well than girls, the gap being much wider than the national picture. The most recent teachers' assessments indicate a fall in standards overall to well below the national average but with girls performing well and boys performing badly. However, teachers' assessments are not moderated and therefore may not reflect the actual standards attained. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection.

224 In 2000, GCSE results in history were well below average with girls getting poorer results in history than expected when compared to their results in other subjects. The GCSE results in 2001, although below average, indicate improvement with girls performing as well in history as in their other subjects.

225 Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are just below those normally found. Pupils use chronological conventions and historical vocabulary, many give detailed and well reasoned oral answers demonstrating good knowledge and understanding. However, personal studies completed by pupils contain insufficient analysis or explanation and too much description.

226 Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 now match the average for all schools. In Year 11 pupils can skilfully evaluate and use critically historical sources relating to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. In Year 10 pupils display a good knowledge and understanding of the complex events surrounding the outbreak of the First World War. Pupils need to develop further the ability to select and record relevant information.

227 At both Key Stages pupils are making good progress in most history classes. The



progress made over time and in class by pupils with special educational needs is good as a result of good teaching and well targeted support. In one lesson, pupils with special educational needs were able to recall a wealth of information relating to Henry VII and then go on to use this and additional information to put together a 'personal profile' of Henry VII.

- 228 Teaching is good overall and has a positive impact on learning. In the best lessons enthusiastic teachers plan lessons well, explain the objectives of the lesson, initiate interesting and challenging activities, make good use of resources, check with the pupils that the objectives have been achieved and set purposeful homework. At the end of a Year 11 lesson pupils were able to describe why and how propaganda was used against the Jews and assess the impact such methods had. Most lessons observed were good or very good. In only a small number of lessons was the work too easy for the pupils, the pace slow or the lesson lacking in structure.
- 229 The planned curriculum for history ensures consistency in terms of what should be taught. Teaching takes place in stimulating and well equipped classrooms and again this impacts positively on the learning. Teachers' assessment is insufficiently moderated and the National Curriculum levels awarded do not necessarily accurately reflect what pupils know, can do or understand, particularly in the case of boys. At Key Stage 4 insufficient use is made of assessment and performance data to set meaningful targets for pupils.
- 230 There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the subject leader to check that the strategies that have been put in place to raise attainment are being followed through.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Supportive and effective teaching strategies with lower ability and special educational needs pupils.
- Behaviour and enthusiasm of all pupils for their work.
- Access to information and communication technology for all pupils in specialist lessons, through subjects, library resources and computer clubs at lunchtime and after school.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Schemes of work should be reviewed in order to:
  - provide a co-ordinated approach with other subjects in Key Stage 3.
  - plan differentiated activities to challenge the most able pupils in all key stages.
- Consistent marking and assessment by all teachers and subjects who have responsibility for delivering and assessing key strands.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of all teachers of information and communication technology.

- 231 The information and communication technology course in Key Stage 3 provides a firm foundation for the acquisition of skills and knowledge for all pupils. In Key

Stage 4 GCSE and GNVQ courses in information and communication technology are popular option subjects. All pupils take a short course leading to national accreditation of key skills of information and communication technology.

- 232 At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is broadly in line with national expectations with all pupils attaining between Levels 3 and 5 by the end of Year 9 in recent years. The lack of Levels 6 or 7 was due to the inappropriate introduction of GNVQ for Year 9, where pupils were unable to fully develop skills and knowledge required for National Curriculum. GNVQ is no longer offered in Year 9. The most able pupils underachieve due to insufficient challenge in lessons, and girls attain better than boys at the higher levels. Pupils with special educational needs attain above national expectations for their ability.
- 233 Overall, the pupils' current work shows they are attaining standards at least in line with those typically found. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress with the presentation of work using desk top publishing. The least able cut and paste images with ease. Older and more able pupils are becoming more sophisticated users; they build up four-page documents, combine text with rotated and resized images, and are considering the needs of their intended audience. Able pupils in Year 9 select and sort columns of data using *Access* database. They confidently move between their database and word processing software to solve set problems.
- 234 In 2000 attainment in GCSE information studies continued to rise. All pupils attain well above national averages for grades A\*-C, and in line for grades A\*-G. The average attainment of boys in information studies is higher than in other subjects both in school and nationally. Provisional GCSE results for 2001 show a significant fall on 2000 with 45% A\*-C grades, a fall of 19% on 2000. Although 69% of pupils achieved their target grades, these were too challenging for many.
- 235 Current standards are above those normally found in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4 key skills lessons, lower attaining pupils carry out research from both CD-ROMs and the Internet, they select and edit relevant information to design attractive pages. More able pupils confidently combine text and images from a range of electronic sources. Although the boys are initially more innovative in display, when this is shared, the girls adopt the techniques quickly. Some very able boys have good technical skills and are over confident, they do not always listen to teachers' instructions, and work is not completed to the required standard for assessment. GNVQ pupils in Year 11 are developing appropriate skills in using spreadsheets, they access on-line teaching materials and successfully use formulae and functions to find ranges of marks from given data. Pupils discuss their printouts with teachers who point out spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors, which is then amended independently, and this supports the development of literacy skills.
- 236 In all lessons, the majority of pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic and this has a positive impact on both the quality and quantity of their work. There is a very small minority of boys in Key Stage 4 who make little effort and thus make minimal progress.
- 237 The quality of teaching is now good across both key stages. In Key Stage 3 it is good,

and often very good. In Key Stage 4 lessons are satisfactory with some good and very good but with a small minority of unsatisfactory lessons. The majority of teaching has well planned objectives which are fully shared in many lessons, but in others pupils do not understand what they are to learn and how they are to do it. Work activities often provide stimulating contexts and are effective motivators. In most lessons there is a supportive learning atmosphere when teachers give effective guidance to individuals in need. When small group teaching is used for the introduction of new skills, it ensures that pupils understand and progress well. Many lessons lack high expectations for the more able pupils, and the absence of planned differentiated activities leads to some underachievement. Although it is early in the school year, some pupils in Key Stage 3 revisit skills in which they are already competent and there is a sense of frustration. Classroom management is almost always good. In some lessons time management is weak leading to insufficient time for a final review to consolidate learning. The Year 7 induction programme is setting a firm basis for future work.

- 238 The information and communication technology department is well resourced with networked computers, appropriate software and a range of peripherals, and these are well maintained by network manager and the technician. Some teaching rooms are too small with insufficient space to support effective group work and planning away from computers. All computer rooms lack appropriate ventilation and some lack window blinds, and excessive heat negatively impacts on pupils' progress.
- 239 There is sound management of information and communication technology. Relationships within the department and with pupils are strong. In Key Stage 3 non-specialists are strongly supported in their teaching. Schemes of work for new courses are under review. All schemes lack provision of challenging activities for more able pupils. Schemes are not yet up-dated to meet the changing needs of pupils with wider experience of information and communication technology on entry to the school. The department's teaching schemes also fail to ensure that it supports the rapidly growing developments in other subjects. There is an appropriate marking and assessment policy for Key Stage 3 but it is applied inconsistently, and a minority of pupils receive little written guidance on how to improve their work. Marked work for GNVQ lacks emphasis on specific assessment criteria. Monitoring of teachers' performance within the department is in the early stages and is not yet planned for non-specialists who have additional responsibilities to teach information and communication technology. Examination and key stage results are monitored but the information is not used to identify real strategies to bring about improvement.
- 240 Many subjects across the school have computers or use computer rooms, and the introduction of *interactive whiteboards* is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Many subjects are implementing information and communication technology into their schemes of work along with the use of the Internet, and this provides opportunities for pupils to consolidate their skills. Although design and technology have responsibility to teach computer control they do not take part in its assessment which lowers the standards pupils attain.
- 241 Lunchtime and after school clubs are well attended, mainly by boys, who continue with work begun in class or research the Internet. Two Year 12 boys have formed a

lunchtime club where they teach Year 7 pupils some basic software skills, and two Year 12 GNVQ girls have volunteered to provide extra individual support in a Year 8 information and communication technology lesson. This extra support is having a positive effect both on attainment of the younger pupils and upon the confidence of the Year 12 students.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Relationships with, and management of, pupils are good.
- Equality of access for pupils at GCSE is exceptional.
- Homework is set regularly, is challenging and consistently builds on work done in the lesson.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a need for more consistency in teachers' approaches to lesson planning and teaching methodology.
- Monitoring of the work of the department needs to become more effective.
- There is a need to build on the good work done since the last inspection on assessment, so that pupils have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve their performance.

- 242 In all 14 lessons or part lessons were observed by inspectors. The work of a sample of pupils was scrutinised in detail and discussions held with pupils and teachers. Departmental documentation was evaluated.
- 243 At the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national expectations. In 2000 62% of pupils gained Level 4 or better. In 2001 the figure was 64%. Girls' performance is better than boys. In 2001 53% of boys gained Level 4 or better compared with 76% for girls.
- 244 Standards at GCSE in French are below national averages. They were well below average in the 2000 examinations. 28% of pupils entered gained A\*-C compared with the national average of 46%. 100% of pupils gained A\*-G. Results improved in 2001 when 31% of pupils gained A\*-C. Results in French have improved steadily over the last four years from a low base.
- 245 Standards at GCSE in German were well below average in 2000. 23% of pupils entered gained A\*-C compared with the national average of 51%. 100% of pupils gained A\*-G. Results in 2001 showed a marked improvement. 56% of pupils gained A\*-C. Results in German have been inconsistent over the past four years though the trend has been upwards.
- 246 No pupil in the school is entered for more than one modern foreign language. If the results in the two languages are combined the improving trend is confirmed. In 2000 27% of pupils entered gained A\*-C in a modern foreign language which was well

below the national average but represents a considerable improvement compared with previous years. In 2001 the figure was 43%. These figures should be seen in the light of the fact that the school enters a high proportion of pupils for the examination (82% in 2000, 93% in 2001). This brings the overall examination performance of the school close to the national average.

- 247 Based on combined languages figures, girls' performance is better than boys though the difference is no greater than is the case nationally. Boys' performance has improved steadily over the past four years. No pupil gained A\* in a modern foreign language in either 2000 or 2001. Standards of work seen in lessons reflect these improving examination results.
- 248 From work and lessons seen standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. In German pupils in Year 9 have a good grasp of grammatical structures. In French pupils of all abilities respond well orally and generally have good pronunciation. Pupils have few opportunities to practise listening and reading skills.
- 249 From work and lessons seen by the end of Key Stage 4 standards achieved by pupils are in line with national expectations. In German in Year 11 pupils of high ability have a good understanding of grammar and are able to apply this knowledge to improve the quality of their extended writing. In French pupils at all levels speak with relative fluency and good pronunciation. Pupils at the C/D borderline make too many basic errors in written work.
- 250 Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 with pupils with special educational needs making good progress. By the end of Year 8 pupils of high ability are able to demonstrate that they have understood, and can use, the past tense. By the end of Year 9 they are able to use all three main tenses though not always with complete confidence.
- 251 Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4. At the beginning of Year 10 pupils of below average ability are able to write basic details about themselves with reasonable accuracy. By the beginning of Year 11 the same pupils can adapt vocabulary which they are given to write letters requesting and giving information.
- 252 Teaching is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3 it is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 it is good.
- 253 Teachers manage pupils well. Relationships in the classroom are invariably good. Teachers value all contributions by pupils and this encourages them to take part in lessons. This is particularly noticeable in lower sets. Homework is set regularly, is appropriate to the needs of pupils and always builds on work done in lessons. Teachers have a lively approach to the presentation of new material. This ensures pupils' concentration at a key time in the lesson. Teachers make good use of questioning techniques when teaching grammar. The best lessons have a clear focus and ensure a secure basis of vocabulary before proceeding to the practice of skills. These lessons have a variety of activities which maintain pupils' motivation. In some lessons the target language is well used, bringing an appropriate level of challenge to

the lesson. In one Year 10 class of high ability pupils, for example, the teacher conducted the majority of the lesson in French, while frequently checking that the class were following. Pupils had to concentrate very hard but made good progress in developing listening skills. In other lessons opportunities to use the target language are missed. Where lessons have weaknesses these are associated with less effective lesson planning and teaching methods.

- 254 Progress has been made in developing assessment techniques since the last inspection. Assessments are now clearly related to National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria. Pupils are now aware of the level at which they are working at Key Stage 3 or of their target grade for GCSE. New support booklets at Key Stage 3 contain level descriptors written in language that pupils can understand. Assessment is not yet effective in raising standards at Key Stage 3 because, although pupils are aware of the level at which they are working, they are not given clear guidance about what they have to do to reach the next level. Pupils do not have specific, measurable targets. Teachers are careful to set out the objectives of each lesson but they rarely express these in terms of targets for pupils to achieve, so that pupils are rarely clear about what they have achieved by the end of each lesson. The marking of pupils' work is undertaken conscientiously by all teachers and they include many encouraging comments but they rarely point out to pupils what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
- 255 At the time of the inspection, because of the sudden resignation of the head of department, the team was led by a colleague in an acting capacity. She was successfully guiding the team through a difficult period and was being well supported by the rest of the department who clearly work together well as a team. The problems caused by this resignation and the subsequent staffing problems it caused are affecting the performance of the department. Difficulties have not affected the good support that is being given to the newly qualified teacher.
- 256 Documentation supplied by the department is thorough and contains many good features. The departmental handbook contains statements about principles of assessment, and the schemes of work give comprehensive guidance on the assessment process. The guidance on use of the target language and on teaching and learning are not comprehensive enough to ensure effective teaching and, therefore, do not contribute to the raising of standards.
- 257 The departmental development plan is not yet an effective means of raising standards. It addresses whole-school priorities but does not address specific priorities which will lead directly to the raising of standards in modern foreign languages.
- 258 The monitoring of the department's work is not yet effective. It has not identified inconsistencies in marking and approaches to teaching, such as the use of the target language which are identified weaknesses in the teaching seen.
- 259 The department has very good resources including a language laboratory used effectively by staff to develop oral skills and a multi-media suite for its sole use. Accommodation is good

## MUSIC

The quality of provision in the music department is **good** and this has been maintained since the last inspection.

#### Strengths

- The high quality leadership of the head of the music department.
- The quality of teaching in lessons observed.
- The positive attitudes and good behaviour of students.
- The enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of the teaching staff.
- The well supported extracurricular provision which is of a very high standard.

#### Areas for improvement

- Assessing how pupils' musical skills develop and using the information to set targets for pupils' future attainment.
- The use of information and communication technology in music at Key Stage 3 needs to be further developed.

260 During the inspection ten lessons were observed covering all years from Year 7 to Year 13 with additional observations of extra-curricular and instrumental work. Music is taught in a purpose built suite of rooms by a team of two specialist staff with additional support from the instrumental music service. Two new music practice rooms of useful size for both teaching and small ensemble rehearsals were recently opened. A wide range of musical opportunities are available on the curriculum which includes opportunities for GCSE, AS and A-level examinations which are taken up by a small number of pupils. Larger numbers of pupils than usually found take up instrumental learning opportunities. Within the high quality extracurricular provision a very extensive programme of rehearsals, concerts and music-theatre presentations are available both in school and within the wider community.

261 The standard of work seen during the inspection is at least typical of that expected in all years. In the GCSE examinations held in the summer of 2001, 69% of pupils gained A\*-C. This is broadly in line with the provisional figures for the national average and is good. The level of attainment of the boys was lower than that of the girls. Due to the small size of the sample this is not statistically significant.

262 The level of attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is variable with there being noticeable differences in prior learning, however, progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good. Most pupils sing with enthusiasm in Years 7 and 8 with notably positive attitudes from both the boys and the girls. Pupils compose short and effective compositions sometimes within formal structures and add a simple harmonic accompaniment to a melody. Although they are encouraged to use information and communication technology to present work and to exploit the Internet for research purposes by visiting recommended music sites, this area of work is under-developed. Conventional notation is used to present composition tasks; and this work could be further developed with an increase in the use of information and communication technology at Key Stage 3. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 use musical language and some relevant Italian terms with success. Untuned percussion instruments are used to create accompaniments for songs and many pupils work with confidence and independence.

- The range of their musical literacy is regularly extended. For example, in Year 9 pupils perform short rhythmic passages in conventional notation at sight, with some fluency. Many pupils use appropriate technical vocabulary with accuracy and most pupils respond well to effective questioning from the teachers. Students use their notebooks to notate their compositions, make notes based on the new learning and record their self-assessments based on the work of the term.
- 263 Targets for each term are well known. Pupils provide a written self-assessment against specific targets on a regular basis. This system could become an even more valuable tool for raising standards if the targets were refined to provide greater clarity in defining the musical skills to be developed.
- 264 At Key Stage 4 pupils who choose to study music to GCSE level make good use of the resources of the department including the use of information and communication technology to create interesting compositions within musical structures. The standard of performance is well supported by the instrumental music service for all pupils. These factors reflected in pupils' confidence in ensemble work and also in their ability to think musically, for example, when analysing the work of a composer in an instrumental score.
- 265 All pupils work on tasks appropriate to their abilities and a scheme for supporting more able pupils has been implemented to ensure that all pupils are appropriately, creatively and intellectually extended. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for.
- 266 Overall the quality of teaching seen was good. It was never less than satisfactory and often good or very good. Lessons are well planned. The pace of lessons is generally good with effective use of time available, resources and the good subject knowledge of the teachers. The good progress made by pupils is in part due to their very positive attitudes and behaviour which was often observed to be excellent.
- 267 Large numbers of pupils receive instrumental lessons. Boys are under-represented in this area and although this is in line with national trends there is a need to develop some positive strategy to try to address this over the coming years. The fact that all tuition is free is impressive though this does limit the length of lessons available.
- 268 A significant strength of the music department is the provision of extracurricular activities. There are many opportunities for extracurricular work, and all pupils having instrumental tuition take part in at least one ensemble. Expectations are high and pupils perform with energy and enthusiasm. The standard of playing of the senior brass ensemble was exceptional for this early stage in the school year. The young musicians are encouraged to work for parts of the rehearsal without a conductor, taking a lead from a senior student and performing as a chamber ensemble. The department supports and encourages performance in the community with over 30 events last year and gives opportunities for musical tours abroad. Theatrical musical performance is a key feature of the school calendar providing a wide range of theatrical opportunities for a large number of pupils.
- 269 This is a well-resourced department that makes a valuable contribution to the personal



development of pupils and students. It provides significant opportunities for pupils of different ages and abilities to work together and to develop a high level of confidence and self-worth both for pupil performers and pupil directors.

- 270 The department is well led by a high quality head of department who is ably supported by a talented and dedicated assistant. The department has a clear sense of direction reflected in planning, targets for teaching and learning and in the enthusiastic commitment to an impressive range of high quality extracurricular opportunities.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' expectations and the standards they set for pupils.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- The organisation and management of lessons.
- Relationships and support for pupils.
- Extracurricular provision.

### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and sharing good practice, to further develop teaching and learning strategies.
- Extending pupils' involvement in assessment and planning.
- Establishing clear priorities and effective action planning for departmental development.

- 271 In all 14 lessons or part lessons were observed by inspectors. The work of a sample of pupils was scrutinised in detail and discussions held with pupils and teachers. Departmental documentation was evaluated.

- 272 The curriculum in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 meets National Curriculum requirements. The Junior Sports Leadership Award and GCSE physical education are offered as an option in Key Stage 4. Provision is enhanced by a wide range of extracurricular open access clubs, inter-school fixtures, competitions, links with sports clubs in the local community, together with visits to outdoor centres and residential visits abroad.

- 273 In recent years the relatively small number of pupils entered for GCSE have achieved results significantly below the national average for the subject. Although 95% of pupils entered in 2000 achieved a pass, only 8.7% achieved a pass at A\*-C grades. The 2001 results, with a similar cohort, although still achieving significantly below the national average, showed a significant improvement, with 100% of pupils achieving a pass and 20% a pass at A\*-C grades. The very small number of girls taking the examination achieved more highly than boys.

- 274 The numbers of pupils now entering both GCSE and A-level courses have increased significantly. Based on analysis of pupils' Key Stage 3 attainments, it is anticipated that results will show significant improvement.

- 275 Overall standards of attainment in physical education are above average. Throughout the age range pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils compete successfully in a wide range of inter-school activities with some individuals achieving significant success. Pupils also have links with outside sports clubs. The wide range of extracurricular activities and teams, including the links with clubs, extends opportunities and contributes to raising pupils' attainment.
- 276 Lesson observations confirm that the majority of pupils are achieving appropriately with some demonstrating high levels of individual skills. Overall, pupils demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of activities. The Year 7 induction programme enables pupils to learn and consolidate a range of basic skills. Pupils were observed in lessons designed to develop co-ordination in striking skills and also ball control and passing skills in soccer. In Year 8 pupils develop skills of communication and decision making when they work collaboratively in small groups to solve problems in basic orienteering. Another Year 8 class extended their knowledge of muscle groups in an appropriate pre-lesson warm up to develop their foot work and racket skills in tennis. Year 9 pupils, in a gymnastic lesson, discussed how to improve the aesthetic qualities of their movement in creating a variety of linked balances.
- 277 In Key Stage 4, Year 10 and 11 pupils developed their techniques in a range of racket skills in tennis and badminton. In a Year 10 GCSE theory classes pupils were observed identifying and classifying bones in the human skeleton. In a practical lesson, Year 11 pupils, following an exercise circuit, assessed and compared their fitness levels and considered the reasons for the range of individual fitness levels recorded.
- 278 The overall quality of teaching is good. Some very good teaching was also observed. Staff possess good subject knowledge and are confident and assured. Effective lesson planning, organisation and good class management provide structure and progression for pupils' learning. Shared learning objectives, clear explanations and demonstrations enable pupils to understand and develop their work. However, pupils have few opportunities to assess their own progress. The best lessons provide well-planned opportunities for observation and analysis, with clear focus and reinforcement of key elements through practices, discussions and evaluation to ensure challenge and progress.
- 279 Pupils respond well to this purposeful approach. Pupils, especially those on examination courses, feel well supported. Pupils and students are very well dressed for physical education activities. The great majority are very positive, pay attention, concentrate, and with few exceptions work with energy, determination and enthusiasm to meet tasks and challenges. Relationships and behaviour are very good. This contributes to pupils' good progress within the subject and to their social and personal development
- 280 The department has recently been reorganised. Newly qualified staff are well supported, roles, responsibilities and job descriptions are established and provision is

made for regular department meetings. Documentation is comprehensive. The new teachers offer a range of complementary strengths which provides an excellent opportunity to share good practice. Establishing key priorities, together with effective action planning, will further support the development process. The department is well placed to move forward and has already identified areas for improvement.

- 281 Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection. Liaison with primary schools has improved. Attainment is higher overall. Many more pupils enter GCSE and A-level courses and results are improving. The school has gained the prestigious 'Sportsmark' Award in recognition of its provision for physical education.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Results in the GCSE examination have shown a marked improvement in the past three years.
- The department is committed to providing excellent support for pupils' spiritual development.
- Teaching is good: lessons are well planned with a range of interesting learning activities.
- The subject is well lead by a head of department who possesses a clear vision for its future development.

### Areas for improvement

- The department lacks a rigorous process for monitoring, evaluation, action and review that will ensure the continued development of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils are sometimes given insufficient help in structuring their writing appropriately.

- 282 In all ten lessons or part lessons were observed by inspectors. The work of a sample of pupils was scrutinised in detail and discussions held with pupils and teachers. Departmental documentation was evaluated.

- 283 The most recent GCSE results for 2001 are well above the national average for students gaining A\*-C grades. In the past two years results have been about the national average and this represents a marked improvement from previous years. Fewer boys have taken the subject at GCSE over the past four years and their achievement has been below that of girls.

- 284 In the work seen during the inspection, by the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving standards that broadly match those expected for their age. Boys and girls perform at about the same level. Most students are developing a sound grasp of religious beliefs and practices from a number of the faiths found in this country; and they are able to appreciate the impact that belief has on the lives of adherents. Pupils adopt positive attitudes to religions that are not their own and are able to see the value of aspects of beliefs from a range of faiths. Some pupils reveal a capacity to produce independent work of a good standard and in which symbolic ideas play a significant part. For example, in a higher attaining Year 9 class which was examining the theme of

creation, pupils skilfully designed imaginative models and pictorial representations to show how humankind has managed the environment. Pupils listen attentively and are able to recollect and comment on stories that they have been told. For example, in a lower attaining Year 7 class, pupils recalled accurately key events from the life of Abraham. Although pupils write at length and take a pride in the presentation of their work, their writing often lacks structure and organisation: this is a weakness that will cause them difficulties as they attempt to convey complex ideas in a logical form. Pupils are generally making good progress and achieving well.

- 285 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are achieving standards in line with national expectations. Although in the GCSE examination course girls have been more successful than boys, in class and homework boys and girls perform at about the same standard. In the lessons observed, the standard of work produced in the GCSE course is similar to that attained in the general religious education lessons and represents the full spectrum of attainment. By the time they reach 16 years of age pupils are able to recall and appreciate the significance of previously covered work. Higher attaining pupils are able to explain the significance of complex religious concepts. For example, in a lesson on the Christian idea of God, pupils clarified and elucidated the meaning of the Trinity. Pupils are able to reflect on difficult abstract concepts and to comment thoughtfully upon their implications. For example, in a lesson on Ultimate Questions a class of Year 10 pupils was able to offer sensible suggestions on how a believer and non-believer might see the purpose of life.
- 286 The attitudes and personal development of pupils are good in all years and very good in the Sixth Form. The main reason for this is that teachers have created a positive learning environment that reflects a genuine concern for each individual and seeks to promote their self-worth. Teachers provide excellent role models and pupils respond by arriving at lessons prepared to work, sustain concentration, are eager to answer questions and happily collaborate with their fellow pupils on the tasks set.
- 287 Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teachers invariably adopt a calm, supportive manner that helps to settle classes and encourages pupils to concentrate on their work. Lessons move along at a brisk pace and pupils are presented consistently with challenging questions. Teachers' expertise in the subject is of a very high order and this is used to good effect to deepen pupils' understanding. As a result sometimes of less effective time management, teachers do not always check to ensure that the pupils have understood the objectives for the lesson before moving on to a new activity.
- 288 Learning is good. Teachers have produced programmes of work that capture pupils' interest and develop their understanding of the subject. Teachers communicate enthusiasm for the subject and this results in pupils engaging well with both straightforward activities that increase their knowledge of the subject, but also in exercises that demand a reflective approach to the solution of problems. Pupils are making good progress in exploring and forming their own views on religious issues. On occasions, some pupils' responses lack depth and tend to be spontaneous reactions. Sometimes, their attention slips when written work is undertaken and progress is hindered.
- 289 Since the last inspection good progress has been made on the areas for improvement.

Religious education is provided now for all pupils at Key Stage 4, assessment procedures inform curriculum planning more effectively, resources on world faiths have improved and pupils' skills in information and communication technology have been considerably enhanced.

- 290 The department is well led through a team approach that makes the most effective use of all teachers' strengths. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject and, as a consequence, she has brought about a large number of improvements in recent years in order to attain that vision. In many respects she has been very successful but monitoring and evaluating the work of the department to inform future development is under-developed. The subject is now well established and makes a significant contribution to the life of the school in terms of its emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and spiritual development. This is a very effective department that has made considerable progress over the past five years.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

- 291 During the inspection subjects and courses other than those that are part of the National Curriculum were observed. A summary of judgements about these subjects is as follows.

### **Complementary studies**

- 292 Complementary studies are taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 11 for one lesson each week. The course covers personal, social, health, careers and citizenship education.
- 293 Pupils show knowledge and understanding of the topics covered similar to that shown by pupils at similar ages in other schools. Their ability to recognise and respond to social and moral issues is good. The skills pupils need to make informed choices about their own lifestyles are less well developed.
- 294 Teaching in complementary studies is generally good. The resources and guidance provided for teachers gives a very solid foundation for the units of work. There are relatively few opportunities for more active and experiential approaches to learning that support pupils' development of skills such as reflection, evaluation and independent decision-making. However, very good links with other agencies and providers make a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- 295 Because there are no nationally agreed standards for the subject, little formal assessment of pupils' achievement has been undertaken. This is recognised as an important area for development.

### **Sociology**

- 296 Sociology is a popular option choice at GCSE. Pupils make good progress in this subject, and achieve standards above the national average.
- 297 This good achievement is because of the thorough way the subject is managed, and the good teaching that is a characteristic of the subject. The use of assessment and

learning objectives to inform teacher's planning and pupils' learning are an area for development.

### **Business Studies**

- 298 Pupils who take business studies reach standards that are generally in line with those achieved nationally. The pupils who choose the course make good progress when their prior attainment is taken into account, and do better on average in business studies than they do in other subjects.
- 299 Teaching in the subject is at least satisfactory, and teachers' good knowledge and skills are an important factor leading to good progress.

### **Child Development**

- 300 Child development has been a successful subject over the years, with pupils achieving standards at about the national average. The pupils, almost always girls, make good progress when their prior attainment is taken into account.
- 301 Teaching in child development is well-structured and is a positive factor in the good progress made by the pupils. A particularly good feature is the way that coursework is organised, so that pupils know very clearly what is expected against the syllabus requirements, and are told what they need to do to reach high standards and to improve their work where necessary.
- 302 The subject helps to give breadth to the range of subjects available to pupils in Key Stage 4.

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

In the inspection, five 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
Chemistry	1	100	47	0	6	2.0	0.9

### *GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	67	96	0	45	4.0	6.4
Biology	2	100	88	0	34	4.0	5.3
Business studies	5	100	91	20	30	4.0	5.3
Chemistry	1	100	89	100	42	8.0	5.9
English literature	4	100	92	50	36	7.0	5.9
Full Design and technology	1	100	92	0	29	4.0	5.4
General studies	11	73	85	9	28	2.6	4.9
Geography	3	100	92	0	37	3.3	5.7
Mathematics	5	100	92	80	89	4.0	6.0
Music	3	100	93	0	35	6.0	5.7
Sociology	7	100	88	71	37	6.9	5.5

### *Intermediate vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate GNVQ	18	56	73.2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Information technology	7	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Leisure and tourism	5	100	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Health and social care	6	83	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

## MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics was inspected as a focus subject. In science the focus was on biology, but physics and chemistry were also sampled. Two lessons were observed in each of physics and chemistry. In physics very small numbers of students make comparisons with national standards unreliable. Students tend not to perform as well as might be expected from their GCSE grades. In both lessons seen teaching was at least good. A very good lesson had a lively delivery and a variety of activities which challenged students' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of physics to a practical situation. This resulted in good progress and consolidation of their grasp of the theoretical concepts involved. Students were made to think for themselves in both lessons. Of the two chemistry lessons, one was sound the other very good. In both the teachers showed good subject knowledge which enhanced their explanations. The very good lesson used a much greater range of teaching methods, which both helped and challenged students' knowledge and understanding. More students take chemistry than physics. In 2001 there was a good balance between male and female students and all achieved at least a pass grade at A-level. The AS-level pass rate in 2001 was below the provisional national average.

### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **sound and improving**.

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching which is promoting good learning.
- Very positive students who are keen to work hard.
- The capacity to continue to improve.

#### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of factors affecting students' performance and taking appropriate action.
- The provision and management of resources.

303 The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 showed that students attained at levels just below the national average overall although only five students were involved that year. Four of the five students entered for the examination obtained pass grades. In relation to their GCSE grades students did as well as expected. No students failed to complete the course.

304 The standards of work of the current students in Year 13 are at least in line with the level expected from their GCSE performance. In the lessons seen they were doing very well in response to some very good teaching which challenged them to attain well. For example, in one lesson on logarithm graphs they responded well to the teacher's use of the *interactive white board and computer generated material* completing more than would be normally expected and fully understanding all aspects of the work.

305 Students in Year 12 had only just begun their course but were achieving appropriately on work which built directly on their previous learning on the GCSE course. Most



showed a good knowledge and understanding of GCSE work, which they were able to develop and apply in new situations.

- 306 Teaching is very good overall and students are making good progress as a result. The key strength of the teaching is teachers' good subject knowledge, which ensures good lesson preparation to deliver challenging material at a brisk pace. Teachers use a range of methods to deliver their lessons, which helps to promote interest and enthusiasm amongst the students.
- 307 Students are making good progress and are learning effectively. They concentrate well and work diligently in response to the very good teaching. Year 12 students responded well to solving three pairs of simultaneous equations to identify the vertices of a triangle, working quickly and accurately.
- 308 Teachers provide a range of work for students outside the classroom but expect students to identify difficulties for themselves and to overcome them using a range of strategies from tutorials with the teacher to use of the Internet.
- 309 The very good teaching and improving standards stem from effective subject leadership. Target setting for each student is developing, based on a wide range of information. As yet this information is not sufficiently shared with the students in order to set short-term targets and so monitor more closely the progress students make.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The first set of the new AS-level results showed an improvement on standards in previous years.
- Teaching overall is good; lessons are well planned, with brisk pace and a variety of activities that help students to understand the subject.
- Teachers' very good knowledge enables them to give clear and interesting explanations that motivate students so that they concentrate and are keen to learn.
- The number of students taking AS-level biology has doubled this year.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of data on students' performance to help teachers' to set and agree targets with students.
- Recruitment of more male students.
- Use of assessment during a module of work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.

- 310 The new Curriculum 2000 AS-level results in 2001 showed an improvement on previous years' results. The percentages of A and B grades and A to E grades were above the provisional national averages for 2001. Female students again were in the

majority. This year and in previous years the numbers of A-level students have been small, making direct comparison with national data misleading. Improvement (value added analysis) against GCSE results is not routinely carried out by the department for students taking the subject. A/AS-level biology students did as well as expected overall in 2001.

- 311 The standard of attainment of current students for this early stage in their courses is at least average. In Year 13 lessons, A-level students were able to use the *chi squared test* to calculate the significance of results of genetics experiments that they were presented with. They were able to explain the sequence of chemical reactions by which energy is released from carbohydrates. Students often lack confidence, but teachers are able with skilful questioning to build on students' knowledge and to devise a variety of activities to effectively reinforce students' understanding. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but a lesson on the microscopic structure of cells built effectively on good recall of knowledge of cell structure from GCSE level. In a lesson to analyse the quantity of glucose in solution, practical skills were good. They were able to work out and accurately make up serial dilutions of the sugar, mix these with potassium manganate(VII) and find out the length of time taken to decolourise the solution, carefully ascertaining when the colour finally disappeared as a way of measuring the concentration of the glucose. They then used the technique to analyse an unknown concentration of glucose in a solution by graphical analysis of the results of their investigation. The technique was clearly explained. The explanation was enhanced by the teacher's good subject knowledge and a PowerPoint presentation that had impact and clarity, effectively focussing students' attention, helping them to carry out the task successfully.
- 312 Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm for the subject and this helps students' motivation and interest. Lessons are well planned and well structured with a variety of activities. For example, in a biochemistry lesson dealing with a conceptually difficult topic, the teacher used the *interactive whiteboard* to share learning objectives, the overhead projector to show clear diagrammatic representations of chemical pathways, referred students to the text book illustrations, used questions targeted at particular individuals to check their knowledge and understanding, got them to devise their own charts to represent the reactions involved in the processes being studied and probed individuals understanding again while they were working individually. An end of lesson review checked and reinforced students' understanding and was followed by the setting of homework to complete the purpose of the lesson. Objectives are usually clear, so that students know what they need to understand. Lessons are well paced, with timescales set to help students to plan their work. Teachers' skilful questioning techniques help to check students' knowledge, skills and understanding. Questioning is used well to check if students of different ability have understood particular points and difficult questions are often used to challenge pupils. End of lesson reviews, when used, effectively consolidated the lesson objectives. Of the four lessons seen, two were sound and achieved their objectives, one was good and another very good. The good and very good lessons were characterised by greater student involvement in their own learning, encouraged by the structure and variety of the lessons.
- 313 Students' written work is in the form of notes, assignments and practical work which

are conscientiously marked by the teachers with constructive comments. Files are well organised. Sometimes students study techniques are enhanced by their having to devise presentations that involve use of a variety of resources including information and communication technology. These presentations have in the past contributed to students' assessment in the key skill of communication. They are confident in their use of books and information and communication technology.

- 314 Students are conscientious, well motivated and concentrate in class. They co-operate well during group work and can work independently too, though they are sometimes somewhat reliant on the support provided by the teacher. They respond well to the obvious interest that teachers show in them and the subject that they are teaching.
- 315 The subject is well led and teachers have a shared enthusiasm for the subject. The schemes of work support teaching and learning, particularly those that give lesson-by-lesson guidance. A very good feature is the section for addition of development ideas; this enables an individual teacher's good ideas to be shared and incorporated into the repertoire of all teachers. Insufficient use is currently made of data on students' performance to refine and agree targets with individual students. Staff and students lack awareness of how performance at GCSE influences potential performance at A/AS-level. Assessment during a module of work is not sufficiently well used to identify students likely to under-achieve, diagnose their difficulties and target intervention strategies. Observation of teaching is at present under-used as a way of improving practice as part of teachers' performance management. Shortage of accommodation sometimes limits the variety of teaching techniques possible.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

One lesson of design and technology was observed. The teaching was sound. The group brainstorming session helped students to make good progress, but the rest of the lesson could have involved the students more, for example, in discussion of the scope of the project. Students' GCSE knowledge appeared to be insecure.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies was inspected as a focus subject. This is the only course offered by the school in this subject area.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

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

### Strengths

- Strong level of individual support given to weaker students.
- Emphasis on the use of information and communication technology as an aid to learning, such as spreadsheets and use of the Internet for research.
- Good range of teaching styles.

### Areas for improvement

- To share learning objectives with students, and thus have a focus for review of learning at the end of lessons.
- To review schemes of work to provide extra challenge for most able students.
- To develop strategies to raise attainment through monitoring and evaluation of students' performance.

316 Over recent years, low numbers of students have taken A-level. Results have varied, and in general the number of A-B grades have been below national averages. Provisional results for AS-level in 2001 show a slight improvement on A-B grades. In both years all students achieved A-E grades which is in line with national figures. Results have been affected by the policy of open access to the Sixth Form which has encouraged students with low entry qualifications and some high levels of absenteeism, as well as lack of teachers' experience of the new AS course. More boys than girls study business studies at advanced level and this reflects the gender balance taking GCSE. There is little difference in attainment between boys and girls.

317 During the last few years attainment in GCSE business studies in Year 11 has been improving steadily. The new Year 12 A-level business studies has seen a huge growth in numbers of students many with higher ability than previously. Boys outnumber girls significantly, and are more responsive in class to questioning and when taking part in discussions, whilst many of the girls remain passive.

318 Standards are higher in Year 12 than last year even at this early stage in the course. All students had collaborated in small groups to adopt a specific stance in a debate on privatisation. The majority had carried out detailed research, and the most able students spoke eloquently and confidently for or against the motion showing a high level of understanding for its consequences. Those with lower ability listened well, through oral work showed a strong level of understanding and were willing to amend their views in the light of convincing arguments. They are developing a grasp of business terminology through work on external influences to business, and able students can describe the concept of inflation. There is some lack of clarity on the difference between profit and profit margins. The majority of students make significant learning gains in lessons with additional support from their teachers, and attainment is in line with that expected for A-level.

319 The Year 13 group is very small with a wide range of ability. Students have visited a

restaurant in another area, and are now developing a hypothetical business plan for a similar venture near to the school. Less able students experience difficulty in applying their knowledge in sufficient depth to new situations and their attainment is below that typically expected for this course. The most able have a developing sense of maturity in the way they tackle their work.

- 320 Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good, and some very good teaching. Teaching methodology is more limited where there is a small number of students in Year 13. Although teachers give one-to-one tuition to the benefit of those present, they find planning difficult for future lessons when they are unsure which students will be present and what work they have missed, and this has a negative impact on progress. Effective, innovative and challenging activities are a feature of Year 12 lessons, and this is setting a firm foundation for future work. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, however, when these are not shared with the students it is not possible to review what has been learned by the end of the lesson. All teachers use analogies from the local and national business world to support learning, and there is good use of questioning to reinforce learning and encourage more thoughtful and deeper responses. Students are strongly encouraged to use information and communication technology for written work, they have prepared partnership agreements, use spreadsheets to prepare cash flow forecasts, and make appropriate use of the Internet to find up-to-date news information.
- 321 Work is marked with guidance for improvement, although some early written activities lacked the challenge expected for A-level. Students show high levels of enthusiasm when written work is returned and are keen to discuss it with their teacher. Teachers monitor students' examination results, and underachievement is identified at various stages throughout the course. However, real strategies for dealing with underachievement are yet to be developed.
- 322 Schemes of work are being reviewed to include a wider range of teaching activities, and make greater use of recently purchased resources. Schemes lack differentiation strategies to meet the needs of all students, extra support for weaker students is evident in lessons but more challenging activities for the most able have yet to be identified. There are insufficient textbooks available for all Year 12 students.
- 323 Management within business studies is strong and there are good relationships between staff and with students. Monitoring of teaching is taking place, it is analysed and a programme of further development has begun. With the advantages of larger and more able teaching groups, the department is now showing that it has the capacity to succeed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

An AS-level course in information and communication technology was introduced in 2001. Provisional results for 2001 are low with D being the highest grade attained. Some students had low entry qualifications and teachers were inexperienced in the delivery of this new course. These factors had an adverse effect on attainment. In the Sixth Form, teaching seen was satisfactory. In lessons, AS-level students often show high levels of technical skill, but the acquisition of knowledge is developing less well. 60% of students attained pass level in

GNVQ, with the remainder attaining between one and three units. This represents good progress by these students. Many Sixth Form students on this course have high levels of absence, and this has a negative impact on results.

In Year 12, AS-level students are able to discuss and use a range of input devices, although they are dependent upon their teacher for prompts on many theoretical aspects, their practical skills are generally higher than their underpinning knowledge.

### **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL (GNVQ intermediate)**

In leisure and tourism one very good lesson was observed, which used a variety of techniques including a PowerPoint presentation that effectively focussed students' attention.

Questioning techniques were used well to probe students' recall and understanding and very good one-to-one reviews took place. Students were helped to learn for themselves by clear explanation of the criteria for successful completion of the section of work. In 2001 all six students entered achieved a pass grade.

In 2001, for the first time, three students were entered for A-level physical education. All were successful, with one student achieving a C grade. In Year 12 students were observed developing their communications skills by making presentations, following research into key aspects of the ancient Olympics. In a practical session they extended their knowledge and understanding effectively by coaching one another in specific skills and strategies for badminton and basketball.

### **HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE (AVCE/AS LEVEL)**

In 2001 in health and social care intermediate GNVQ all five students obtained a pass grade and one obtained a merit. One lesson was observed. This did not adequately involve the students, they were passive for most of the lesson and, for an extended period, copied down dictated notes.

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

There was no focus subject in this area but lessons in art and music were observed.

In the most recent AS-level examinations in art, results were lower than predicted and no students sat A-level examinations. Previously, the numbers of students taking A level examinations have been in the low single figures. Results at A-level for the same period have been below the national average overall including the award of higher grades.

In the work seen during the two lessons inspected, standards at Year 12 were judged to be broadly in line with course expectations. Students are beginning to explore and experiment with a variety of media both two and three dimensions. They are more confident when exploring the ideas and approaches of other artist and designers. They exhibit increasing willingness to trial new techniques and experiment with combinations of media. The quality and range of the work seen in Year 13 was limited to that of one student.

The quality of teaching in Year 12 is good. Students are encouraged to work independently, explore and respond to the ideas of other artists and designers as they develop their work based on landscapes. They make good progress and their response and attitude is excellent.

Music in the Sixth Form continues to attract a small number of students with the numbers of AS music students showing an increase for this year. The results for the three students entered for examinations at AS and A-level in the summer 2001 were good, given their earlier attainments, and in line with the national average. Students in the Sixth Form show a high level of motivation and respond well to the warmth shown by their good-humoured teachers. They are empowered to think musically and in some detail. This is a consequence of the supportive and challenging teaching. The standard of musical performance is high. This contributes to good examination results. A number of Sixth Form students direct ensembles and lead other instrumental support activities. This provides more opportunities than the two teaching staff could provide alone and serves as an admirable role model for younger pupils.

## **HUMANITIES**

The inspection focus in this area was sociology but lessons were also observed in geography, history and religious education.

In geography standards in the Sixth Form are at least in line with course expectations, both in the lessons observed and in examination results.

There have been no A/AS history groups until this year. One AS-level lesson was observed. This was well taught and enabled the students to make good use of source material. All students made good progress.

Religious education courses in the Sixth Form have only recently commenced, but results have been well above the national average in GCE AS-level for students gaining the higher grades A-B. The standard of work in the Sixth Form is about average overall, though some students' achievement is very high. Students are developing a sound grasp of the knowledge and understanding necessary for the course and reveal a lively interest in material that they are studying. In discussion the highest attaining students draw upon a wide range of references from their previous reading and exemplify points with cogent examples. Students are also developing high levels of competence in their information and communication technology skills. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on the early New Testament period, students made PowerPoint presentations exemplifying and explaining their research on the Zealots. Teaching of religious education seen was of a very high standard.

## SOCIOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Results at A-level have been better than or similar to the national averages.
- Teaching is good: lessons are well planned, contain a wide range of learning strategies and constantly make challenging demands of students.
- The success of the subject is built upon the rapport that exists between the teacher and students and among the students themselves.
- The subject is well led: a great deal of attention is given to individual students' needs and this emphasis has resulted in the continued success of the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The department lacks a rigorous system of monitoring, evaluation, action and review to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Results in AS-level coursework in 2001, for the majority of students, were well below the indicative target grade.

324 Results in GCE A-level for 2000 showed a significant improvement from previous years both for the proportion of students achieving a pass and the percentage attaining the higher grades A or B. Results for A-level in 2001 were not as good for students achieving the higher grades, but all gained a pass. Over recent years, students have at least achieved or exceeded the predicted grade for sociology based on their earlier GCSE grades. Although all students, with only one exception, attained at least a pass in the new GCE AS-level course in 2001, students achieved grades below their predicted ones. This lower than expected set of results was the consequence of under-performance in the coursework element in the syllabus. There have been no significant differences in the standards achieved by male and female students.

325 The standard of work of current students is about average. In Year 13 students are achieving as well as expected based on their predicted grades. In lessons observed, students were developing a firm grasp of relevant sociological theories, gaining a sound understanding of the way in which evidence could be sought and honing a number of investigative skills. Students also possess a secure understanding of a range of sociological theories. For example, in a lesson on the sociology of religion, students successfully summarised the views of leading thinkers, such as Durkheim, on religion for the purpose of essay planning practice and they could talk in an informed manner about the best way to construct the draft plan.

326 Year 12 students have made a promising start to the course and achieving much as expected. Although only at the beginning of the year, students are already able to display a number of investigative skills. For example, in a lesson on the family, students successfully presented a range of methodologies that they would adopt to ascertain the views of the local community on aspects of family life; and they provided well reasoned criticisms of the value of each particular approach to surveying local people's views.

327 Students in both years do well and male and female students achieve similar



standards. The attendance rate at lessons is high and students, once embarked on the subject, do not drop out of it.

- 328 Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a consequence. The effectiveness of learning is in no small measure the product of the positive working atmosphere resulting from the rapport that exists between teacher and students. The teacher possesses a secure, confident grasp of the subject that enables her to draw constantly on a wide range of appropriate examples and to constantly challenge students' thinking. Expectations of students' performance are high. In a lesson on Marx's theory of religion, students were skilfully drawn into a discussion on the strength of his ideas and how they might be applied to modern society; they responded well to the demands made of them in this context, developed their understanding of Marx's ideas on religion and their ability to present a reasoned argument. Occasionally time could be managed more effectively by the teacher to ensure that the maximum amount of learning takes place. Sometimes the teacher accepts one student's definition of a term and does not check that others are equally familiar with it.
- 329 As a consequence of the effective teaching, students are enthusiastic about the subject and make good progress. They enjoy the lively discussions that ensue in lessons and respond well to the demands made of them. Their notes and essays are well organised in their files and they appreciate and act upon the advice provided in the teacher's assessment of their work. Students generally reveal a mature insight into sociological issues in discussions, most are eager to express an opinion, but willing to listen courteously to their fellow students' views. Sometimes more reserved students contribute little in lessons and a minority find it difficult to articulate their ideas.
- 330 Leadership by the head of department is very good. The good teaching and learning are the product of her enthusiasm, abundant energy, effective teaching skills and vision for the subject that has been translated into practical strategies to raise students' achievement. She supports individual students well through her assessment procedures, target setting process and her knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. The unsatisfactory performance of students in the GCE AS-level coursework necessitates a radical review of the preparation and teaching of this element of the scheme of work: this process has already begun. Although some monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has taken place, it has not been sufficiently comprehensive. In order to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning a rigorous system of monitoring, evaluation, action and review should be devised.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus for inspectors was English but in addition one lesson of German was also seen.

In the lesson of German observed the quality of teaching was very good and students made good progress.

## **ENGLISH**

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and encourage the active involvement and participation of students in lessons.
- Students' progress in the new AS and A-level courses is consistently at least satisfactory and often good or better.
- Relationships are always positive and productive. Students work well together and with teachers.
- Students genuinely enjoy lessons, have high levels of concentration and engage with and respond to a wide range of literature.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of value added data and assessment to inform judgements and set learning targets for individual students.
- Students' ability to use the language of literary critical appreciation.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.

331 GCE English literature AS and A-level and GCSE English language retake provision were inspected.

332 Three Year 12 AS lessons and two Year 13 A-level lessons were observed. In addition there were structured discussions with the head of department and with five Year 13 students and less formal discussions and conversations with English teachers and Year 12 and 13 students. AS and A-level folders and coursework were scrutinised along with departmental documentation and attainment data.

333 Overall standards in post-16 English are high.

334 In the academic year 1999-2000, 13 students retook GCSE English language. Most students improved their grades. In the 2000-2001 academic year five out of eight completing the retake programme improved their Year 11 result by one grade. An improvement of one grade for the majority of students represents satisfactory achievement.

335 Results for the last A-level English literature group (examined in the summer of 2000) were significantly better than the national average and in line with or better than school targets for three of the four students. All four students achieved A-C grades compared with 36% nationally. The average points score was seven compared with 5.9 nationally.

336 In the 2001 AS examinations 12 of 13 students recorded grades ranging from A-D. One student withdrew from the examination. 68% of students recorded A-C grades against a provisional national figure of 58%. Twelve students entered gained grades between A and E (92%) against a national provisional figure of 97%. Module retakes resulted in significant improvements against initial assessments. This represents good progress based upon students' previous attainment.

- 337 Progress in post-16 English was judged to be good during the last inspection and continues to be so. Attainment in lessons observed was never less than average in Years 12 and 13 and was judged high or very high in over half the lessons. This represents satisfactory progress from GCSE to AS-level for most students and good or better progress for some. Students genuinely enjoy lessons and engage with and respond to demanding texts. Their level of concentration is impressive. They develop a good understanding of context and the skills of independent/reflective reading and response. They are less secure in their use of critical terminology. There are no discernible differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The increasing numbers of students following A-level courses in English and the good retention rates indicate students' satisfaction.
- 338 The quality of teaching is good overall. In four out of five lessons seen it was good or very good. Teachers demonstrate a detailed knowledge of text and of examination syllabus requirements and assessment objectives. Teachers' questioning and their sensitive responses to student contributions effectively develop and extend understanding. Teacher-student relationships are a particular strength and have a significant impact on students' responses and willingness to take risks. Marking is detailed and supportive with comments which question and challenge with prompts for improvement. However, the use of attainment information to identify individual student targets for future progress is less well developed. Opportunities to develop the key skills of information and communication technology, communication, improving students' own learning and working with others are highlighted in AS and A-level English literature programmes of study. Key skills coverage is mapped in teacher guides and some lessons build in opportunities to develop skills and produce evidence for assessment as appropriate. Students' work is often word-processed and the Internet is accessed for research. Lessons undoubtedly encourage the effective development of the skills of working with others and communication. More could be done around the skill of 'improving students' own learning'. One observed lesson was specifically structured to cover an aspect of communication while enhancing students' understanding of dramatic context and direction in *Othello* and was very effective. Teachers are well qualified. Teaching rooms are suitable and students set them out for seminar work as a matter of course as they arrive for lessons.
- 339 Leadership and management are good. There are clear priorities for development and the introduction of new post-16 courses has been well managed with collaborative preparation and appropriate staff development. Most of the department teach AS/A-level courses and a number of teachers are relatively inexperienced. The systematic monitoring of teaching and learning in order to improve quality and raise standards is under-developed.