

INSPECTION REPORT

CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL

Kenton, Middlesex

LEA: Brent

Unique reference number: 101557

Headteacher: F T Molloy

Reporting inspector: John Bolt
2299

Dates of inspection: 12th – 16th November 2001

Inspection number: 189326

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 (Specialist Arts College)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Brent
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Steven Brunswick
Date of previous inspection:	1996

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18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
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18665	Susan Murray		Special educational needs	
23981	Corinne Stevenson		Science Physics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Claremont High School is a mixed comprehensive school situated on the northern edge of the London Borough of Brent. It is a foundation school and, with effect from September 2001, a specialist college for the performing arts. There are some 1420 pupils and the school has been consistently over-subscribed for some years. The largest ethnic group is Indian, which makes up 58 per cent of the pupil population. About 12 per cent of pupils are of white UK origin, with smaller numbers of Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free meals. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language at 70 per cent is well above average. However only about 5 per cent of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who join the school having achieved the expected level at the end of Year 6 is above the national average in all subjects. However, other testing undertaken by the school suggests that, at age 11, pupils levels of numeracy are better than their levels of literacy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Claremont High School is a good and improving school. Pupils achieve results which are above national averages at both ages 14 and 16. The quality of teaching is good overall. Almost no teaching is unsatisfactory and on occasions it is of the highest quality. Leadership and management are very effective. The school has a clear sense of direction and is well organised. It is increasingly successful in evaluating its own performance. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve good results in Key Stage 3 tests and at GCSE; results are above the national average at age 14 and 16 and are particularly high in mathematics.
- Teaching in the school is good and in a quarter of lessons it is very good.
- The governing body and the headteacher provide high quality leadership and management for the school; they are supported by effective managers at all levels.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude towards the school and to their work in all their subjects.

What could be improved

- Some teachers do not use their assessments of pupils' work to ensure that all pupils understand how they can improve their work and achieve their targets.
- The provision for personal, social and health education.
- The school's diverse community is not sufficiently reflected in the life and work of the school and members of the community, including parents, do not take a full enough part in school affairs.
- The quality of spiritual education, including the provision for collective worship.

The strengths of the school far outweigh the areas for improvement. The identified areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in September 1996. Since that time there have been significant improvements in most areas of the school's work. Standards achieved by pupils have continued to rise and there have been further improvements to the school's premises. In response to the key issues for action:

- The school has adopted a new assessment policy and has greatly improved how it uses data in order to monitor pupils' performance.
- The new headteacher has greatly improved the management of the school. The governing body is now very effective.

- Arrangements for staff training have been improved and the school has gained the Investors in People award.
- Statutory requirements are now met except that there is still not a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	B	C	N/a	

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

Pupils achieve high standards in tests and examinations and in their lessons. In the Year 9 tests, results achieved are above the national average. They are particularly strong in maths where the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels is well above that seen in similar schools. At GCSE, results overall are above the national average, having improved significantly since the last inspection. Virtually all pupils gain some success at GCSE. Although in 2001 results were lower than in 2000, this year group had also done less well at earlier stages. The school has met its targets for GCSE and now needs to set more challenging targets. There are some differences between the performance of the ethnic groups in the school. These are similar to the national picture with Indian and Pakistani pupils doing well while white and black pupils do somewhat less well. Generally, girls do better than boys; this is the case in most schools. The standards seen in lessons are similar to those achieved in examinations with most pupils at least reaching the national average and many doing better than that.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop their personal and learning skills well. The quality of relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is better than the national average.

The quality of relationships and pupils' attitudes are strengths of the school. Pupils are very committed to their work and want to do well. They respect their teachers and behave well in lessons. There is very little unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils' personal development is supported by the wide range of activities that they participate in and by the opportunities offered to contribute to the life of the school. Attendance is above average but some lessons were affected by pupils' late arrival.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching overall was good with a significant amount of very good teaching and very little that was unsatisfactory. In both English and maths, teaching is good overall and slightly better in Years 10 and 11

than with younger pupils. Teaching in science is also good. Teachers know their subjects well and plan work carefully. In the best lessons, clear objectives are set and explained to the pupils. Work is matched to the ability of the pupils. These very good features need to become features of all lessons. Work on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has begun. Teachers of other subjects are gradually becoming aware of how to support pupils in these areas. Pupils who receive support because they have special needs or English as an additional language are taught well. Pupils' learning is good; they work hard and respond to the teachers' high expectations. Sometimes there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently and they do not always know clearly enough how they can improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It meets the needs and aspirations of the pupils well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with EAL is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' social and moral education is good. Provision for cultural education is satisfactory. Provision for spiritual education is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care provided by the school is good.

The curriculum meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the school does not monitor sufficiently thoroughly the teaching of information and communication technology in other subjects. The personal, social and health education programme needs better co-ordination and provision for education about sex, relationships and drug misuse needs developing further. The work done by teachers of SEN and EAL is good but there is insufficient support to meet the needs of all the pupils.

The quality of care is good. Tutors and heads of year know pupils well and provide good support for them. Monitoring of pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. Assessment is thorough but not enough is done to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work and that parents can support them in this. Good information is provided to parents but their involvement in the life of the school as a whole is limited.

The school currently does not do enough to recognise the diversity of cultures to be found in its community. It does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors carry out their functions in a very effective manner.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's monitoring and evaluation of its work are currently satisfactory and it has realistic plans for further progress in these areas.

The strategic use of resources	Resources are very well used to meet the school's key objectives.
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The leadership of the headteacher has been very important in improving the leadership and management of the school. He has been well supported by the Governing Body. Managers at all levels are increasingly effective in developing their area of responsibility. Staff at all levels feel involved in decision making. The school has a clear sense of direction and has the capacity to continue to improve. There has been good progress in improving how all aspects of the school's work are monitored and evaluated and the school is clear about what needs still to be done. Financial management is good and the principles of best value are well applied in this area. The school does not at present do enough to seek the views of pupils and parents as part of its evaluation procedures.

The school has succeeded in recruiting good quality teachers. The quality of professional development is good and has been recognised by the award of Investors in People status. Accommodation is good overall and there are plans for further improvements to meet the needs of Arts College status. There is a satisfactory level of learning resources available to teachers and pupils. The ratio of computers to pupils needs to be improved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' positive attitude to school. • The good progress made by pupils. • Pupils' good behaviour. • The good quality of the teaching. • The school is open and approachable. • The school has high expectations for pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantity of homework. • How closely the school works with and informs parents. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team felt that the quantity of homework set and the range of activities outside lessons are both good. It found that the information provided to parents is good but it agreed that parents play only a limited role in school affairs. Overall parents views about the school are very positive.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH-FORM CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form in this large 11-18 comprehensive school is bigger than in most other schools. It is increasing in size and currently has 313 students in comparison with the national average of 163. There are more girls than boys, especially in Year 12. There is a large number of students from ethnic minorities, mostly Indian, and most of whom speak English fluently. A wide range of academic subjects is provided together with a limited number of vocational courses. More than two-thirds of students stay on into the sixth form from Year 11 and a significant number of students enter from other schools. Most students have attained 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE and embark on two year programmes which lead to GCE Advanced level. GCE Advanced level results match national averages.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is increasingly successful and cost effective. Results at GCE Advanced level in 2001 matched the national average and represented satisfactory achievement in comparison with students' GCSE results. Standards have continued to rise and are now good in the majority of subjects. The sixth form caters well for its students through a wide range of subjects mostly leading to GCE Advanced level, and provides very good enrichment through an extensive programme of activities outside lessons. Teaching and learning are good in almost all subjects and very good in art, geography, music and religious education.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and a high proportion is very good.
- Students are very well supported and guided in their personal and academic development. The exceptionally strong support of teachers is greatly appreciated by students.
- Students are mature, confident and positive in their views of the school and their experiences in the sixth form.
- The curriculum is broad and flexible and very well matched to the needs and interests of students and parents. Opportunities for enrichment and personal development are very good.
- Leadership and management focus strongly on improving standards and the quality of provision.

What could be improved

- Standards achieved in examinations.
- Procedures for the systematic tracking of students' progress and setting targets for improvement.
- Procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of sixth form provision.
- Provision for religious education for all students and for spiritual development.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Examination results are broadly average. Overall both boys and girls achieve well regularly. Teaching and learning are good; current standards of students' work are above average
Biology	Good. Standards are improving. Results were below average in 2000 but improved significantly in 2001 to be in line with the national average. Teaching and learning are good.
Physics	Good. Results in 2000 were average and represented good achievement in comparison with students' GCSE results. Students' current work is in line with national expectations. Teaching and learning are good
Business	Good. Students achieve well in comparison with their GCSE results. Results over last two years well above average. Teaching and learning are good and students' current work is above average.
Economics	Satisfactory. Standards were below average in 2000 but improved significantly in 2001. They are still a little below national expectations. Students achieve as well as expected in comparison with their results at GCSE. Teaching is good.
Art	Good. The standards of work seen are above expectations – cohort numbers are too low to make reliable national statistical comparisons. Achievement is good. Teaching and learning are very good and students show excellent attitudes to their work.
Drama	Good. Standards seen are above average. Teaching and learning are good Results in 2001 showed satisfactory achievement in comparison with GCSE results.
Music	Good. Although results have been below average for the last two years, students are now reaching above average standards. Teaching and learning are very good and students show excellent attitudes to their work.
Geography	Good. Results in 2000 were average. Work seen shows a trend of improvement and standards are now good. Teaching and learning are very good.
Sociology	Satisfactory. Standards of work seen were average. There were no entries for examination in 2000. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Psychology	Good. Standards are improving. Results matched the average in 2000 but they improved in 2001 and the work seen was good. Teaching is good. Students achieve well.
English	Good. Results in 2000 were below average but students' achievement has been consistent with their GCSE results. Teaching and learning are good with much that is very good. Standards in lessons are good.
German	Good. Results fluctuate from year to year but are above average overall as was work seen in lessons. Teaching and learning are good.

In other subjects, work was sampled. In these teaching was good and a high proportion was very good, especially in religious education. Attainment in most subjects has matched national averages over the last three years, and students progress as well as expected from GCSE to GCE A level. Standards are improving. Work seen during the inspection was average in all subjects and above average in religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Teachers provide very good guidance and support for students both academically and personally. The procedures for assessing their attainment and progress are good, and improved systems for systematically monitoring progress and setting targets are being developed.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. It is based on clear aims and values, and a strong commitment to continuing growth, development, improvement of standards and equality of opportunity. Targets for development are clearly prioritised but their achievement is not sufficiently supported by more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

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"> • Teachers are accessible for help. • They are well taught and challenged. • Curriculum choice suits talents and aspirations. • They are helped to study independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment of their work. • Information about their progress. • The range of activities and options available. • Advice about future options.

The strengths identified by the students are well founded. Assessment is good overall but varies in thoroughness between subjects. Students are well informed about their progress and about future options. The range of activities and enrichments is very good and compares favourably with that in other sixth forms. Questionnaires were filled in at a very early stage of the school year when some students in Year 12 especially were unclear about aspects of sixth form provision. Apart from assessment, the areas identified for improvement were not regarded as problems in the discussions with students during the inspection.

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. Pupils now enter Claremont School with good results in their Year 6 tests. The attainment of pupils joining the school has been rising over a number of years. These pupils have often reached slightly higher standards in mathematics than in English. During their time at the school, they achieve results that are above the national average both in the key stage tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE at the end of Year 11. There are very few areas of relative weakness in pupils' performance in examinations. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection.
2. In the Year 9 tests in 2001, there was a marked improvement in performance in English while high standards were maintained in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels (levels 6 and 7) in mathematics was particularly high and results in this subject were well above those seen in schools with similar pupils. Compared to results in similar schools, those in English were above average and those in science were average.
3. In other subjects, according to the teacher assessments, there is a wide variation in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 9. 100 per cent of pupils were assessed at this level in information and communication technology but only 58 per cent in music and 60 per cent in history. There is some inconsistency in the approaches to assessing pupils at this stage.
4. Results in GCSE in 2000 were the highest achieved by the school. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE passes at A* to C rose by 14 points to 70 per cent. This was more than 20 points above the national average. In 2001, 62 per cent of pupils reached this level, still more than 10 points above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five passes at any grade and at least one pass rose in 2001 after a slight fall in 2000. Very few pupils fail to gain some success in the GCSE examinations. The test results at age 14 for these year groups show a similar pattern to the GCSE results with slightly better results in 1998 than 1999. This suggests that the difference in results was caused by differences in the prior attainment of the two year groups.
5. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C passes was well above the average for schools with similar levels of attainment at 14. The percentage gaining A* to G passes was close to the average for these schools. Comparisons with schools that have comparable intakes give similar results. The information is not yet available to compare GCSE results for 2001 with those in similar schools.
6. The school analyses pupils' performance with great care, comparing performance at each stage with the national results. It is able to identify both individuals and groups who seem to be underachieving and to set targets for improvement. From age 11 to 14, in English, girls make satisfactory progress but boys do not. In mathematics, the progress made by all groups of pupils is good. Overall boys made better progress than girls but the few pupils making unsatisfactory progress were all boys. In science, pupils' progress is satisfactory.
7. Between ages 14 and 16, pupils make greater progress overall than in most schools. In 2001, Pakistani pupils made the greatest progress from age 14 to 16, followed by Indian and Black African pupils. On average White UK and Black Caribbean pupils made less progress and achieved lower results overall. Girls achieved better results overall than boys. However Indian boys did well while Pakistani and White UK boys did noticeably less well.
8. GCSE results in English are close to the national average. Pupils' progress in English from age 14 to 16 is in line with that found nationally. Girls achieve higher results and make better progress than boys; in 2000 the gap between boys' and girls' performance in English was larger than that seen in the country as a whole.

9. GCSE results in mathematics are well above the national average. In 2000, the average grade achieved by pupils at Claremont was more than one grade higher than the average across the country. The proportion of pupils gaining A* and A grades was more than three times the average. The performance of girls was particularly good. In 2001 this high level of performance was sustained.
10. Amongst the other subjects, good results were achieved in 2000 in all science courses, business studies and history while pupils did somewhat less well in art, economics and music. In 2001, results in art, music and physical education improved compared to 2000 while results across the school as a whole were lower.
11. The standards being achieved in lessons are very much in line with those seen in test and examination results. Attainment is at or above national expectations in 8 out of 10 lessons in Key Stage 3 and 7 out of 10 lessons at Key Stage 4. Attainment was above national expectations in about 4 in 10 lessons with little difference between the different year groups. Where attainment is below national expectations, it is usually in the lower sets and in lessons where some or all of the pupils have special educational needs. On only very rare occasions did the standards achieved by able pupils fall below what could be expected of them. There is work of a very high quality in the higher sets in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages with pupils of all ages. It was also seen in individual GCSE lessons in design and technology, English, geography and history. Standards in religious education are consistently above the expectations set out in the Agreed Syllabus.
12. The school's GCSE target for 2002 at five or more A* to C passes is 60 per cent. This is lower than the figure actually achieved in both 2000 and 2001. Results from the Year 9 tests suggest that these pupils are of a similar ability to other year groups in the school. The year group that will take GCSE in 2003 achieved even better results overall in Year 9. This suggests that the school's GCSE target is now insufficiently challenging.
13. The standard of literacy in the school is satisfactory overall. Generally the quality of pupils' speaking, listening and reading is of a higher standard than their writing. Girls make better progress in developing their literacy skills than boys and in some years the difference between boys and girls has been greater than the national difference. The standard of numeracy in the school is good. Pupils have good skills in this area when they join the school but they continue to make good progress and reach very high standards overall. Overall, boys generally do better than girls but the most able girls do very well. Pupils at times find it hard to transfer skills learnt in mathematics to other subjects but they are well supported in reinforcing numeracy skills in lessons such as science, geography and design and technology.
14. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are not as high as was suggested by the 2001 teacher assessments and there is no examination data at Year 11 to show how well pupils do at that age. Nevertheless it is clear from lessons and from pupils' work that all students can use standard programmes to a satisfactory degree and able students are able to undertake more advanced tasks. Pupils make appropriate use of the internet for research and can use specialist programmes in, for example, music.
15. The most able pupils make good progress across the school and achieve well. In many subjects, most notably biology, business studies, design and technology, English, geography, history and mathematics, the proportion of pupils gaining A and A* grades at GCSE was well above the national average. Good progress has been made in implementing a programme for supporting gifted and talented pupils through Excellence in Cities.
16. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well during both Key Stages 3 and 4. In 2001, at the end of Year 9, over a third of the pupils identified as having SEN attained in line with national expectations and a further third came close to that level. At the end of Year 11, almost all the pupils with SEN took 6 or more GCSEs. More than half of them did substantially better than their teachers had predicted. In most lessons, pupils with SEN attempted the same work as other pupils and achieved in line with their prior attainment. Targets in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are ambitious, but the school's reviews of IEPs show that pupils make progress in line with expectations.

17. The achievement of pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) is good at Key Stage 3 and better at GCSE and 'A' levels, even when their knowledge of English was poor at entry to the school. Their achievement is attributed to the good quality support provided by the school through careful targeting and to their high levels of motivation and excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils with EAL respond well and make rapid progress.

Sixth form

18. GCE Advanced level results have fluctuated over the last four years but broadly match the national average. In 2000, the students entered for 2 or more GCE Advanced levels averaged 15.9 points in comparison with a national average of 18.2. These results fell from a score of 17.8 in 1999. In 2001, the school's average point score rose to 17.2. Standards have continued to rise and are now good in the majority of subjects. There is less variation in the standards in different subjects than at the time of the last inspection.
19. Comparison of examination results with students' attainment at GCSE shows that students achieve as well as expected. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The achievement of the most able students is satisfactory overall, but there has been underachievement by some more able girls. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students.
20. Students were entered for GCE Advanced Subsidiary level for the first time in 2001. Comparison with national averages is not possible at present. Thirty one per cent of students gained the highest grades of A and B but 15 per cent were ungraded. The teaching of key skills, initially focusing on communication skills, has recently been introduced in Year 12 and it is too early to see the effect of this on standards.
21. The percentage of students continuing in full-time education post-16 is high. In 2001, the overall staying on rate was 91 per cent with 65 per cent choosing to stay at school. The great majority of those entering the sixth form in Year 12 continue their studies in Year 13. In 2001, 86 per cent of students in Year 13 proceeded to university.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. The last inspection indicated that across the school pupils had a positive attitude to learning. This continues to be the case and their attitudes to school and to their work are now very good. The vast majority are well motivated, interested and responsive. For example, in a Year 10 design and technology lesson on the use of vacuum forming and the process of laminating to design and make plastic trays, pupils were very enthusiastic and had a responsible approach to the use of hot equipment to heat up the plastic. They had a courteous approach to one another to ensure that everyone could see the demonstration. Pupils do not allow the rare weaknesses in teaching to hinder their learning. In a Year 9 lesson when a teacher failed to make a point sufficiently clear, pupils discussed it amongst themselves thereby clarifying their own thinking and understanding. Many pupils are interested and involved in school activities. For example, pupils participated enthusiastically in the rehearsal of the school drama production of 'The Wizard of Oz', and also in the science club. In one sample, some three quarters of pupils were involved in some form of out of school activity. The conscientious and motivated attitude of most pupils has a positive impact on their learning.
23. The behaviour of pupils continues to be good both in lessons and around the school. The great majority of parents think the behaviour of pupils is good. Instances of unsatisfactory behaviour in the lessons seen during the inspection were very rare. The school has an orderly atmosphere. Pupils move round the school in a calm and quiet manner. Most pupils are courteous, good-natured, open and friendly towards each other and adults. Overall there is a respect for property. The number of permanent exclusions is low. The school's procedures for managing behaviour has led to a high level of fixed term exclusions when compared with similar schools. The school is, however, now putting in place additional strategies such as pupil support programmes and learning mentors to better meet the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion.

24. The quality of relationships in the school is very good. There is good social interaction in many of the lessons. In a Year 8 French lesson pupils were very co-operative and helped one another when describing themselves so as to understand the difference between the masculine and the feminine genders. Pupils feel the school is a safe place to be, that there is very little bullying and that any incident is appropriately addressed by staff. There is a positive relationship between different ethnic groups and the school is a harmonious community. In many religious education lessons but also elsewhere, pupils showed a respect for the values and beliefs of others. Pupils show personal responsibility. For example, a Year 7 class was concerned about a punishment that had been given to a whole class. They raised the issue with their Head of Year who was able to resolve the matter.
25. The members of the school council show a very mature attitude and have initiated many improvements in the school such as the environmental garden, the seating area in the playground and the recycling of cans and paper. Pupils enjoy and respond well to the opportunities for taking responsibility for events such as sporting events and parents evening. In lessons, most pupils show a high level of responsibility for managing their work. Year 11 pupils are well aware of the pressures of GCSE coursework but they manage them successfully.
26. The pupils' attendance is good, as it was at the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is lower than the national average. Most pupils are punctual to school but a small minority are late, particularly in Key Stage 4. During the inspection, some lessons started late due to pupils not arriving on time from their previous lesson or from breaks. In some respects, the school needs to improve its arrangements for recording and analysing attendance, including the greater use of information and communication technology. The school now has plans to do this.

Sixth form

27. All the sixth form students completed the students' questionnaire and, although they expressed a number of criticisms in response to the questionnaire, in discussion they are very positive about their experiences in the sixth form. They are very appreciative of what the school offers and especially of the very strong support provided by the teachers. They enjoy the sixth form and the wide range of learning experiences offered, and would recommend the sixth form to others.
28. Relationships are very good, and the attitudes of students in lessons are always at least good, and often very good. The great majority are mature, confident, courteous and articulate. They have strong perceptions of their role in the school and are keen to take initiative and responsibility. For example, as prefects, they work hard and enthusiastically to make the prefect system valued and respected by younger pupils.
29. The majority, especially in Year 13, have very clear views of their longer term goals and ambitions. Many have well developed attitudes and skills that will enable them to continue learning effectively in the sixth form and beyond.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Teaching is one of the strengths of the school and this is reflected in the overall quality of teaching, which is good. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good or better in 63 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 25 per cent of lessons. At Key Stage 4, 68 per cent of lessons are good or better and 20 per cent are very good or better. Overall there were 3 lessons where teaching was excellent and only 4 unsatisfactory lessons were seen.
31. All the teaching was at least satisfactory in art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education. A high proportion of teaching was good or better in design and technology, English, modern foreign languages and religious education. There was very good teaching in a high proportion of design and technology and religious education lessons. In geography and physical education at Key Stages 3 and 4, more lessons were satisfactory than good. The

quality of teaching was of a consistent standard across the key stages in most subjects and in no subject was there a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

32. In all areas, teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects. Good subject knowledge is a particularly strong feature in science, modern foreign languages, geography and history at both key stages and in art at Key Stage 4. In mathematics, teachers' very good subject knowledge enables them to present ideas in a rigorous and challenging way.
33. The school has begun to implement the national Key Stage 3 strategies and training for staff has begun. Work in this area however, is still in its early stages. The English department has introduced starter activities in Year 7 in addition to the established private reading time. The school as a whole has adopted a key words approach to literacy. For example, very good attention was given to literacy skills in some physical education lessons, particularly GCSE, but less emphasis is given in practical lessons. In most areas, subject specialist vocabulary is used and teachers take trouble to explain instructions clearly to pupils. In mathematics, the start of lessons is routinely used for mental and oral activities. The geography, science and design and technology departments make a significant contribution to the reinforcement of numeracy. However, the contribution of subjects other than mathematics and English to the teaching of basic skills is inconsistent.
34. Teachers' planning is sound overall and there is evidence of careful planning in some subjects for example in Key Stage 3 art. In the most successful lessons, clear learning objectives are shared with pupils and work is matched to pupils' needs. There are examples of good practice in history and geography. This is not, however, consistent across the school. In modern foreign languages, science, mathematics and physical education, planning, although sound, is not yet consistent.
35. In general, teachers' expectations of their pupils are good, for example, in mathematics, where teachers have high expectations of pupils at all levels of attainment, particularly in terms of the pace of work and the level of challenge. There was also good practice in design and technology where Year 7 pupils responded well to high expectations about the quality and impact of their design. Similarly in science, able pupils in Year 9 have begun work on topics from the Year 10 programme. High expectations are similarly a strength in art at Key Stage 3. However, in some cases such as some science lessons, teachers' expectations do not take enough account of the attainment of the different groups.
36. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and this helps pupils to improve their understanding of the work. Questioning skills are used effectively in many lessons such as English and in mathematics where the best lessons are characterised by good questioning and the use of focused, well-judged and challenging exercises. In physical education, very good lessons included a variety of activities which interested and motivated pupils. An example is where Year 10 pupils studying netball appreciate the theory of rules and tactics being taught alongside practical activities.
37. In most lessons, time and resources are well used although, for example, in mathematics and science, some lessons continued after the lesson bell had gone. Resources are particularly well used in modern foreign languages, where every pupil has a textbook and in physical education where resources are well organised with safety in mind. Support and technical staff are used effectively in science and English and in modern foreign languages, where the foreign language assistants are very well deployed.
38. The teaching of information and communication technology relies significantly on the contributions of teachers in a range of subjects, although the amount of specialist ICT teaching is being increased. This has improved since the last inspection. Information and communication technology makes valuable contributions to pupils' learning in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, religious education, music and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The identification of link teachers for ICT in all subjects has helped to raise the confidence of staff and to improve the quality of teaching. A number of pupils with SEN, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11 make good use of ICT both for research and to word process their work. However the school is not yet fully realising the full potential of ICT in its teaching.

39. Sound use is made of ongoing assessment. Marking is regular and most departments are now using the school's new marking policy. The best marking is constructive with clear targets for improvements and advice on how this can be achieved. However, targets for improvements are not consistently provided which means that pupils are sometimes unclear about what they need to do to improve.
40. Homework is set regularly and is well used in many subjects. Mathematics and history provide particular examples of good practice in this area where homework is used to consolidate and extend pupils' learning and to encourage investigation. In design and technology, effective use of marked homework highlights teaching points in the lesson.
41. Individual and small group teaching of pupils with SEN is consistently good. Teachers address particular pupils' difficulties (often following the objectives on a statement), as well as developing cross-curricular skills and the pupils' ability to work independently. Pupils gain confidence through working together and discussing their ideas. Where pupils have difficulty in concentrating, work is organised in short sections with frequent changes of activity. Lesson planning is based on a thorough assessment of the pupils' difficulties.
42. Teachers are generally supportive of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons. Specific work is planned to match their needs in only a minority of lessons but teachers tried to include all the pupils in the activities of the lesson. Pupils with SEN were encouraged to answer questions and other pupils were not allowed to interrupt them if they needed a little longer than others to formulate their answers. Subject teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils on the SEN Register and IEPs are disseminated to relevant staff.
43. Effective support is provided for pupils learning English as an additional language who are beginners and in the early stages of English acquisition through withdrawal and in class support in English, mathematics and science. An example was a science lesson, which had been jointly planned by the EAL specialist and the class teacher. As a result EAL pupils gained access to the scientific vocabulary and gained a better understanding of the key concepts involved in separating mixtures and solutions.
44. In lessons where there is no EAL specialist support, teachers are usually aware of the EAL learners and many, especially those at Key Stage 3, take appropriate action. For example, in a history Year 7 lesson experienced readers were paired with inexperienced readers. Every department has a 'link-teacher' through whom information on EAL pupils and appropriate teaching strategies to support them is shared. The EAL specialist provides training for teachers new to the school.
45. The quality of pupils' learning was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of lessons. In more than 60 per cent of lessons it was good or better. Learning was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen in design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education and science. In only 4 lessons was the quality of pupils' learning not satisfactory.
46. An overwhelming strength of the school is the way in which pupils respond to their work in a consistently positive manner. They work at a very good pace, sustain concentration, complete tasks set and show both interest and commitment in all subjects and at all key stages. This means they make gains in both knowledge and understanding. Pupils can work well independently when they are given the opportunity to do so, as happens in art and modern foreign languages. However, the approach to teaching means that pupils often have insufficient opportunity for independent work. There were examples of this in English and science. However, there were good examples of group and individual work in history and geography. The inconsistencies in assessment mean that pupils do not always know in detail what they need to do to improve their work.
47. Pupils with SEN work hard and are well motivated, whether in mainstream lessons, small groups or in individual sessions. During Key Stage 3, pupils enjoy their individual and small group lessons and apply themselves well to the work set. They become more confident as a result of the opportunities to express their ideas and discuss their work. In Years 10 and 11, they take responsibility for their

own learning, bringing work to the Support Options and taking an active role in planning, research and presentation. Pupils with different kinds of SEN work well together in groups without close supervision.

Sixth form

48. Teaching is good. In the 80 per cent of the 68 lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good or better. In 29 per cent of lessons, teaching was very good and in a further 6 per cent of lessons, teaching was excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was good or better in nearly all subjects with particularly high proportions of very good teaching in art, English, geography, music, religious education and theatre studies. Teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection, especially in the amount of good and very good teaching.
49. Teachers' subject expertise is very good and used very effectively in inspiring enthusiasm for subjects and in enabling students to make good advances in their knowledge, understanding and skills. For instance, students' understanding and appreciation of the text in a Year 13 English lesson on the 'Duchess of Malfi' were significantly enhanced by the teacher's enthusiasm and very good knowledge. Similarly in a Year 13 physics lesson, students' understanding of the action of a capacitor was helped significantly by the breadth of the teacher's knowledge which was used well to give useful examples from daily life. Teachers' very good speaking skills in modern foreign languages enable students to become fluent speakers of the language being taught.
50. Teachers' expertise also results in good lesson planning providing clear aims and objectives and enabling students to understand the purpose of lessons and to engage closely in their learning. Good planning often results in good pace, variety and challenge. Teachers' expectations of the standards to be achieved are appropriately high. This is often reflected in probing questioning leading to close interaction between teaching and learning. In a Year 13 lesson in mathematics for example, searching questioning resulted in the close engagement of students in a productive dialogue. Teachers' good knowledge of students' learning requirements at best results in the careful match of work to their needs. This was well exemplified in a Year 12 physics lesson where students progressed well in the development of practical skills because practical tests were well matched to their ability. On the other hand, there are lessons where progress is slowed because insufficient attention is given to ensuring that work is appropriately matched to pupils' differing needs.
51. Students respond well to challenging teaching as for example, in a Year 13 geography lesson on coastal erosion. Here, challenge, combined with good humour, prompted students to work with enthusiasm in suggesting innovative ideas about coastal management and developing hypotheses on predicted slumping at key points of the coast.
52. Skilled use is made of a good range of teaching strategies to facilitate learning at an appropriately demanding level. In many lessons the combination of individual and class teaching, ensures a good rate of progress and structured learning. In a number of lessons however, while learning benefited from clear and authoritative teaching, too few opportunities were given for students take initiative. For example, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson, the development of students' problem solving skills was hindered by the tendency of the teacher to over-dominate the lesson. Similarly, while questioning is often a strength in its challenge, there are times when students are not allowed to answer in any depth and the level of their understanding is not fully explored.
53. Learning is significantly enhanced by very good relationships which enable students to work with confidence. Assignments set for homework are well designed to extend and consolidate specific skills, knowledge and understanding, and to promote independent learning skills. The on-going assessment of students' progress is mostly regular and thorough, but varies in its consistency between subjects.

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

54. The school's curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and those for religious education. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have all been addressed. The curriculum provides for pupils a range of opportunities which, on the whole, is appropriate to their aptitudes and interests and meets the expectations of parents.
55. In addition to the National Curriculum subjects, all pupils follow courses in religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In Years 7 and 8, drama forms part of the English curriculum. In Year 9, pupils follow a separate drama course and the school plans to extend this to younger pupils. From Year 8, all pupils study two foreign languages, French and German. The time allocated to this area of the curriculum is higher than that usually found. However, very few pupils build on this experience to take two languages to GCSE level. In Years 7 and 8, classes have more than one teacher in more than a quarter of their subjects overall, which is unusually high. In some cases this affects the continuity of their learning.
56. At GCSE, abler pupils have the opportunity to study the three separate science subjects rather than combined science. All pupils study English, mathematics, science, a modern foreign language and a design and technology subject. In addition they choose GCSE courses from amongst the other National Curriculum subjects together with drama and business studies. All pupils follow core courses in religious education and physical education and they have the opportunity of studying these subjects to GCSE level. There are currently no vocational courses offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11, except for the developing provision for information and communication technology.
57. Information and communication technology is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 9. In other year groups, it is taught through the other subjects. Schemes of work are in place to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. However, arrangements for monitoring the implementation of these schemes and the attainment of the pupils in all classes are not yet fully established. To further enhance provision for information and communication technology, the school has now begun to put in place a comprehensive vocational course beginning in Year 9.
58. In Year 7, pupils are taught in groups containing the full range of ability. As they move through the school, an increasing number of subjects group pupils according to their attainment, although some subjects retain mixed ability groups. These arrangements are monitored by the school to ensure that the needs of pupils are met in all subjects
59. The school's provision for teaching literacy and numeracy is good. Teachers of English and mathematics have begun to implement the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in Year 7. At present they are concentrating on introducing the new approach to the first stage of the lessons. There are some good examples in other subjects of work that supports the development of literacy and numeracy. For example, there is a focus on key words in lessons in many departments.
60. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum opportunities provided by the school. For example, in physical education and design and technology boys and girls have access to areas of the curriculum that are sometimes only taken up by one gender. In Years 10 and 11, there is a support option, which provides additional opportunities for less able pupils and pupils with EAL to improve their GCSE work.
61. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum. Specialist provision for pupils with SEN is very good. It supports the work that pupils do in mainstream lessons as well as addressing pupils' individual learning needs. Targets on IEPs contain an appropriate balance between those to be addressed in individual and small group sessions and those applicable in ordinary lessons. There is a limited amount of in-class support available and this is used mainly in Year 7 to assess needs, to help pupils to settle and develop good study skills.
62. During Key Stage 3, pupils with learning difficulties are withdrawn once or twice a week to develop literacy and numeracy and, where necessary, language and communication skills and this enables them to access the curriculum at a level that is consistent with their attainment. Pupils are encouraged and given the opportunity to use ICT both for research and to record work. At present,

the school does not offer alternatives to GCSE, which was a recommendation of the last inspection. However in practice, nearly all pupils now do achieve some GCSE passes at the end of Year 11.

63. Pupils with EAL are generally well supported to enable them to make good progress to access the full range of the National Curriculum. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are usually withdrawn for at least two periods per week to improve their basic literacy, numeracy and English language skills until they are able to work independently in lessons to access the curriculum. EAL pupils are also assisted with their homework or coursework through lunchtime and after school homework clubs. The EAL specialist is part of the learning support team and there is good ongoing liaison with SEN teachers to assist in the identification of those EAL and minority ethnic pupils who may also need SEN support.
64. Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good. There is a clear code of conduct which pupils are aware of and which is generally kept to. Moral issues are addressed through the teaching in a substantial number of subjects. In physical education concepts such as fair play and sportsmanship are emphasised. In religious education, issues such as prejudice, discrimination and human rights are considered and there is a strong focus on studying the background to contemporary issues and ideas in history. There is a strong moral and social content to assemblies.
65. There is a large number of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school. There are year and school councils and the members of the School Council have developed a web site for the council on the school's intranet. Pupils take responsibility for tasks around the school and in support of school events such as parents' meetings and sports matches. There is a school Environment Committee and a range of fundraising activities has been undertaken. In all these areas, and in many others, pupils take initiatives and make an active contribution to the life of the school. Social development is addressed through the curriculum in a number of areas, notably in religious education, geography and history. In some subjects, pupils have good opportunities to manage group work but this could be further developed.
66. The provision for developing pupils' cultural awareness is variable but is satisfactory overall. Good contributions are made by art and drama lessons. Drama work of high quality also takes place outside of lessons. Fewer pupils choose to study music after age 14. However there is a wide range of musical activity outside lessons which supports pupils' cultural development well. The school makes good use of the opportunities available to it by organising visits to theatres, concerts and other cultural activities. In design and technology, music and art lessons there is an appropriate recognition of the contribution of other cultures and faiths; this is a particular strength in art. However, overall, there is insufficient recognition of the range of cultures represented in the school. For example, extra-curricular music activities are predominantly based on western musical traditions and there was limited recognition of the festival of Divali, which fell during the inspection.
67. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and tutorial sessions made only a limited and inconsistent contribution to spiritual development. Spiritual issues are addressed in religious education lessons but rarely elsewhere.
68. Provision for PSHE is not yet satisfactory. Many individual PSHE activities are of good quality and the overall content is broadly in line with National Curriculum guidance. However, there is a lack of coherence at whole school level. In recent years the PSHE programme has been managed by Heads of Year with no school co-ordinator in place. This has led to missed opportunities for strategic development, insufficient attention to staff development, a relatively low status of lessons amongst some staff and difficulties with overall monitoring and evaluation. There is insufficient provision for sex and drugs education and these areas need to be improved significantly in line with national guidelines. The school itself has recognised PSHE as a priority development area. A whole school co-ordinator took up post just half a term before the inspection and an appropriate and comprehensive PSHE action plan has been developed. When implemented, the plan should address the current areas of weakness.

69. The school has a programme of careers education and guidance, which meets statutory requirements. Pupils are supported in Years 9 and 11 by advice and information from teachers and an attached careers adviser. The careers programme is supported by a careers library and a number of work-related activities. Every pupil completes a National Record of Achievement in Year 11 and all pupils take part in a quality work experience programme in Year 10 which helps to develop key skills. The "Insight Into Industry" programme in Year 9 is another well-established programme involving local business which helps develop career related skills. The contribution of subject areas to careers education is not fully developed.
70. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular enrichment activities. Most pupils benefit from one or more of these opportunities. The language department alone, for example, organises three trips to France each year - one in partnership with the art department - one trip to Germany, European Work Experience for Year 12, trips to the French Institute, lunchtime language clubs and a range of revision classes for examination students. Other departments are equally active. Pupils with SEN, and others take advantage of the Paired Reading / Spelling sessions and the lunchtime homework club and use them well. The atmosphere in the Homework Club is relaxed but business-like. Paired Reading provides a valuable opportunity for younger pupils to work with Sixth Formers in a structured but friendly context. The school does not currently receive any external funding for study support activities.
71. The quality of links with the community and other institutions is good. There are close connections with the local St Luke's Hospice, for example, and with local old age pensioner groups. Pupils are also involved in activities in local primary schools. Very good links have been established with the four main primary feeder schools which provide around 90 per cent of the Year 7 intake. The school primary liaison group, which includes representation from all departments, meets twice a term to organise link activities – open days, taster sessions in both schools, exchange of schemes of work, talks for parents, etc. Links with local further education colleges are very positive and Higher Education links are excellent.

Sixth form

72. Curriculum planning is based on a strong commitment to offer broad and flexible learning opportunities. Planning is coherent and systematic. The school has responded positively to the opportunity to provide greater breadth through Curriculum 2000. At the same time it has kept a clear focus on the strongly expressed interests of parents and students. A good range of subjects is provided comprising twenty two subjects at GCE Advanced Subsidiary and GCE Advanced level, and three vocational courses, two leading to the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education level in Years 12 and 13, and one to the Intermediate GNVQ level in Year 12.
73. The strong bias towards academic courses at advanced level reflects the pattern of students' interests, their up-take of courses and longer term ambitions. The school is accredited to offer a good range of vocational courses, but the low numbers of students choosing to follow them makes them not viable. Students wishing to follow courses not provided at the school are given detailed specific advice about provision in other institutions, both locally and further afield, thus ensuring that all have full access to the courses they need.
74. The arrangements for the introduction of the teaching of key skills have been very carefully considered. Detailed planning, including training for all teachers soundly based on GNVQ experience, has led to a pilot exercise currently in Year 12 focusing on communication skills which will lead to examination in 2002. Extension of the programme to include numeracy and ICT is planned for 2002-3. Personal and social education is provided for all students but inconsistencies in the quality of its delivery have led to the current review of provision.
75. Opportunities for further enrichment at both subject and whole sixth form levels, are very good and students make the most of them. Careful thought is given to the management of private study time to ensure that students develop the skills to use this effectively.

76. Although some religious education is delivered through personal and social education and assemblies, this does not meet the statutory requirements and weakens the support for students' spiritual development. In other respects, provision for students' personal development is very good. There are particular strengths in the support for their moral, social and cultural development. The provision for social development activities has improved significantly since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

77. The good support and care for pupils seen at the time of the last inspection have been sustained. The school has made significant progress in addressing the weaknesses identified at that time in assessment although this work needs to be further developed.
78. The school manager has overall responsibility for Health and Safety procedures which are sound. The policy is regularly reviewed and monitored. Formal site inspections are conducted by the school manager every half term and any concerns are recorded appropriately. No whole school risk assessment is undertaken, although many areas and individual departments do conduct risk assessments and a contractor annually checks PE equipment, science equipment and school boilers. Fire drills are carried out regularly. The school has many trained first aiders who are clearly identified on display boards and on corridor walls. Appropriate Child Protection procedures are in place with a named person who is known to staff.
79. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are sound overall and attendance rates are above the national average. Good attendance is rewarded through certificates of attendance for individuals and class outings for whole forms. Attendance and punctuality are monitored by year staff. However, the school currently has no systematic means of collating attendance or absence figures for each pupil, class or year group. This means the school has no overview of attendance any one time and it was not possible to provide a half-term report for the inspection.
80. The school has good arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Poor behaviour is infrequent and when it occurs it is promptly and effectively dealt with. A Code of Conduct sets out sensible rules and expectations about behaviour, which are well understood by pupils. A thorough and detailed Pupil Support Programme has been developed which incorporates the principles of social inclusion and provides detailed guidance on pupil management and pastoral support programmes. This is particularly designed to support pupils at risk of exclusion. The Learning Mentor Co-ordinator and her team have worked effectively with the pastoral team to support individual pupils and with groups of pupils on themes such as anger management.
81. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and are able to report incidents to staff. They are confident that issues such as bullying, which is rare, are taken very seriously and that prompt and appropriate action is taken. However, the school does not specifically record or monitor incidents of racist or sexist behaviour.
82. The arrangements made by the school to monitor and assess pupils' attainment and progress are sound overall. Progress has been made since the last inspection, when the review of assessment procedures was a key issue for action. A revised assessment policy is in place, which includes specific expectations for how pupils' work is to be assessed and targets for improvement identified. The school grading system is generally adhered to but the quality and usefulness of teachers' comments are variable. It is not always clear how the school's grading system relates to National Curriculum levels.
83. The school has done much to record and analyse assessment data in order to monitor pupil progress and set targets for improvement. A new networked database, Clarefax, for recording pupils' performance has been introduced and contains good assessment and record keeping information. National information on pupils' attainment and progress is now placed on Clarefax, which enables pupils' progress to be assessed and targets set. It also enables the school to monitor effectively the progress of pupils according to their gender and ethnic origin. The database is beginning to be used effectively in a number of areas and a rolling programme of training in its use is underway.

84. Academic targets in form of expected levels are shown in the back of the pupils' planner so pupils and their parents know what level or grade they are expected to achieve. They are asked to set weekly personal goals and each year group has identified very broad targets related to the general development of the pupils. However, because teachers' comments are often not sufficiently focused on precisely what they should do to move from one level or grade to the next, pupils do not usually manage to identify sharp learning targets. Form tutors do not, at present, have sufficient information to support pupils in doing this. Similarly, teachers do not generally take adequate account of the outcomes of assessment in planning future work. A notable exception to this is found in design and technology where a record sheet given to pupils provides a useful monitoring tool and includes level descriptors to help pupils identify ways of improving their attainment. Examples of good practice in this area of work are also to be found in history, geography and SEN. In PE, assessment criteria are in place and are displayed for pupils to see. However, assessment practices are inconsistent in English, mathematics and business studies.
85. The school has good provision for identifying and assessing the needs of pupils with SEN, which builds on information from primary schools and thorough assessment on entry. In-class support and withdrawal groups are arranged on the basis of these results and pupils' progress is monitored in both contexts. Subject teachers know which pupils are on the SEN Register and relevant staff are consulted before IEPs are drafted and statements reviewed. A strength of the IEPs is the strategies that they offer to staff to help them to work with pupils with SEN. The school is implementing in an appropriate way the revised Code of Practice for SEN. The Learning Support Faculty makes good use of input from external professionals. Teachers work closely with the specialist Careers Officer to make sure that all Year 11 pupils with SEN are placed appropriately post 16. It also provides a valuable base for the planned re-entry of excluded pupils and for those returning after truancy.
86. Procedures for the monitoring and support of pupils' personal development are good. From the time the pupils join the school, tutors create a good supportive relationship with their groups. They and other pastoral staff know their pupils well. The effort and achievement of pupils are recognised and celebrated. Bronze, silver and gold merits are awarded for both academic and personal achievements such as good homework or showing courtesy. Particularly in the lower school, pupils value these. Tutors send out "well done" postcards to lower school pupils and certificates of commendation are issued on a regular basis. Other strategies to guide and support pupils include a homework club, a mentoring system and the Claremont Listening in Confidence service where sixth form students trained by Childline offer a confidential counselling service.

Sixth form

Assessment

87. There are thorough and systematic procedures for the assessment of students' attainment and progress across the whole sixth form. This results in students being well informed about how well they are doing, and in regular, accurate and clear reporting to parents on standards, attitudes, attendance and punctuality. Assessment in subjects however is not as consistent. This inconsistency may have led, at least in part, to the negative comments in the student's questionnaire, where over 50 per cent of students considered that they were not well informed about their progress, and over 40 per cent considered that their work was not thoroughly assessed. While discussion with students did not reveal a similar level of concern, they confirmed that assessment varied in its thoroughness between subjects. Assessment is particularly strong in mathematics, art, geography and business studies.
88. Until this year, processes for tracking students' progress were relatively unsophisticated. Records were kept but progress was not systematically tracked against benchmarks within subjects. This is now being addressed not only for the purpose of monitoring progress, but also for setting targets and measuring the value added to students' attainment. Teachers are being required to become familiar with the use of data, national charts and ICT for this purpose. A strong emphasis is being placed on the joint responsibility of teachers and students in monitoring and target setting. Both are very well supported in developing the skills needed, but are held responsible for agreeing and setting targets. Students' targets expect average progress as a minimum but more challenging targets are also identified.

Advice, support and guidance

89. Students are very well supported both academically and personally by their teachers. Those interviewed praised their teachers very highly for going out of their way to help them. Advice and guidance, including careers guidance, are well structured to provide continuing support as an intrinsic part of sixth form provision. Attendance and punctuality are monitored closely and there is effective liaison with parents if problems arise. Students get very good and timely advice on higher education applications. The procedures for UCAS application are exceptionally well structured and the good quality of the applications is often praised by universities. The information provided before students start courses is clear and they are very well advised on the suitability of Year 13 courses in the light of their achievement in Year 12.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. Parents continue to feel positively about the school. The questionnaire shows high levels of satisfaction on issues such as standards achieved, the school's expectations, behaviour and whether children like school. There was some concern by a small proportion of parents about the amount of homework, the amount of information provided to parents, whether the school works sufficiently closely with parents and the range of out-of-school activities. The inspection team found the amount of homework overall to be appropriate and the range of out-of-school activities to be very good.
91. The school has satisfactory links with parents. It is successful in involving them in their child's education and contacts them whenever there are concerns. Parents find the school approachable. The school provides good, sufficient and well-produced general information, although the documentation does not fully meet all statutory requirements. There is an attractive and informative school brochure, a school newsletter 'The Clarion', and regular press releases. New parents receive an introductory booklet giving helpful information. Parents of pupils in Year 9 receive a booklet on the options at 14+. There is at least one consultation evening for parents each year and an annual review day for parents and pupils. These are very well attended. Parents receive an interim report linked to the consultation evening. These give good, succinct information covering attitude, current level and target level for each subject. The annual reports to parents contain similar information as well as comments for each subject. The pupils' planner is used well for day-to-day communication between home and school and contains the pupils' target levels
92. However, the brochure, the introductory booklet and the options information do not fully address how parents can engage with and support their child's learning. Parents also receive insufficient information about the curriculum to enable them to know what their child is currently studying. Comments in the pupils' annual reports are of variable quality. Frequently for the core subjects and nearly always for the foundation subjects, they are about pupils' attitudes. They do not say what progress the pupil has made in specific areas of the subject nor how improvement can be achieved.
93. Although parents receive information about the school and their children's progress, their involvement in and contribution to the work of the school are unsatisfactory. There are some opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school but the response is limited. Very few parents currently are active members of the Parent Staff Association, no parent helps in the school, few turn up to support school fixtures or matches, and often attendance is poor at meetings concerning the general life of the school. There are few opportunities for parents to express opinions about the school although there was a good response to the inspection questionnaire. The school has itself identified enhancing its level of engagement with parents and in particular the development of the Parent Staff Association as a priority.
94. The Learning Support Faculty tries to involve parents as much as possible when their children have special educational needs. They are always invited to reviews of IEPs and are offered advice and strategies to enable them to help their children with their work. Telephone is the most successful mode of contact. While parents do not always attend IEP reviews (unless they are held during

Parents' Evening), they always attend Annual Reviews of statements and are usually very supportive.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

95. There has been substantial improvement in the leadership and management of the school since the last inspection. The current headteacher has been in post for two years. Working closely with the Governing Body, he has undertaken a major reorganisation of management systems in the school. The school has a clear vision and sense of direction. This incorporates a strong commitment to raising standards, to serving the local community and to its role as a specialist arts college. The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher has been central to the improvement seen in the school in recent years.
96. The governing body is exceptionally effective in fulfilling its role in setting the vision for the school, promoting it within the local community and monitoring its effectiveness. The Chair and the key governors know the school well and are closely involved with its work. The Governing Body has been very successful in recruiting governors with a wide range of relevant skills and experience. It does not yet, however, fully represent the ethnic balance in the school. Governors have worked with senior staff in addressing problem areas. They receive and fully consider the termly reviews of subject departments. They play a full part in setting the budget and monitoring income and expenditure, including considering tenders for major projects. Sensitive issues are not always addressed in full governing body meetings, but it is clear that committees and leading governors expect to be informed and have played an active role in addressing areas of weakness. The Governing Body fulfils all its statutory duties except that it does not ensure that there is a daily act of collective worship or adequate provision for religious education in the sixth form and some items of required information are not included in the school's documentation.
97. The headteacher has established an effective leadership team. Its core is two deputy and two assistant headteachers. In addition other staff are co-opted for varying periods as members of the leadership group both as an opportunity for professional development and in order to make effective use of their skills. The school manager is also a full member of the leadership team. This is a non-teaching post with responsibility for areas such as finance, premises, contracts and resources. This has proved invaluable in bringing a wider experience to the leadership team and in freeing teaching staff to concentrate on their areas of professional expertise. The leadership team as a whole supports the headteacher well and makes a strong contribution to the school's progress. Much has also been done to improve the quality of subject and pastoral leadership, which is effective in almost all areas of the school.
98. A key objective over the last two years has been to increase accountability throughout the school. There is an effective meeting structure which ensures that issues are thoroughly considered and that staff at all levels have the opportunity to put their point of view across. Systems of performance management for teaching staff have been put in place. The work of the school is monitored through a range of systems. These include lesson observations, detailed analysis of results and regular reviews of departments. A thorough training programme has focused on the improvement of teaching throughout the school. Impressive work has been done to analyse pupils' attainment using nationally-produced data to make very sophisticated comparative judgements about the work of pupils and teachers and to enable targets to be set for both. However, monitoring and evaluation activities have not yet been brought together to form a systematic and consistent whole school approach to line management.
99. There is a clear, well-structured school development plan, which is matched by plans prepared by middle managers for their particular areas. The plans set out key tasks to be addressed with related timescales, responsibilities and budgets. Progress in implementing the plans is carefully monitored. The school development plan would, however, benefit from closer links to the school's core objectives and its key targets. This would also enable the impact of the plan on the school to be more effectively evaluated.
100. The school has in place thorough arrangements for managing its financial business. The accounts are audited annually and all recommendations are addressed rigorously. Monthly statements are

prepared which enable income and expenditure to be carefully monitored. There is a clear understanding about when governors become involved in financial decisions and this is properly adhered to. Expenditure related to specific grants is properly monitored. Appropriate and increasing use of information and communication technology is made in the school's administration. This includes the school's intranet and a well structured database of pupil performance. Management systems will need, however, to be better integrated to meet emerging government requirements for the electronic transfer of data. In doing so, it will be important for the school not to lose the high quality systems it has already established.

101. The governors apply the principles of best value in all areas of tendering and contracting. The school carefully compares pupils' results with those in other schools. There is, however, scope for greater use of benchmarking in other areas of the school's work. The school could also do more to consult and involve parents and the community in establishing its priorities and monitoring its effectiveness. The school's income is average for its size and location. Its resources are well managed and this has contributed to significant improvements in the quality of education provided. Pupils make good progress and the school provides good value for money.
102. Provision for pupils with SEN is well managed and has the support of the nominated governor for SEN. The faculty has a clear policy and direction and is making good progress towards meeting its targets. Staff work well together; they are enthusiastic about their work and the progress that the pupils make. Procedures are in place to meet the statutory requirements of statements and for identification and assessment of SEN. Information is disseminated and staff are consulted appropriately. The department makes an important contribution in the wider school context in relation to inclusion. However there are currently insufficient staff to meet the requirements of the increased number of statements together with the number of pupils in Year 7 at 'school action' who are assessed as having literacy difficulties as severe as those of some of the pupils with statements. Similarly, reductions in the level of support available for EAL pupils through government grant have meant that there is sometimes inadequate provision for these pupils.
103. There are sufficient, well-qualified staff to teach all areas of the curriculum. This makes a valuable contribution to the good quality of education provided in the school. The school has been successful in recruiting staff to fill all vacancies and its provision is not seriously affected by the current shortage of teachers. The school makes use of support staff both in and out of the classroom. The technicians give good support in science, but there are very few learning support assistants. There is a good quality induction programme for newly qualified staff, following the DfES guidelines. Appropriate mentors are identified for the staff concerned. Staff new to the school are likewise well supported through a planned programme together with a mentor.
104. Since the previous inspection the school has done much to improve the quality of its work by raising the level of skills found in the school. It is now committed to staff development and there are now far more opportunities for professional development and career growth. The school gained Investors in People status in 2001 and the assessor reported very favourably on this aspect. The extensive programme of staff development is linked both to the school development plan and organisational needs as well as to individual needs identified through the performance management reviews. Performance management reviews have taken place for all teaching staff except those new this term. Information from classroom observations feeds into the process and three specific targets are set for each teacher. The staff development group provides a forum for dialogue between staff and management. It plays a valuable role. In a short period of time it has already improved the quality of INSET days, incorporated the development of support staff into the overall training programme, and introduced assessment of the quality of the INSET training that occurs.
105. Overall, the accommodation enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. Since the previous inspection there has been significant expenditure on new developments and on premises maintenance. The school has put a high priority on gaining the resources to improve its facilities. A new modern foreign languages block, a well equipped drama studio and three new classrooms have been provided. A new reception area has just been completed. The design and technology and art block provides a stimulating learning environment. The accommodation for teaching music is only just satisfactory at present but as part of its arts college programme, substantial improvements in

arts facilities are planned. However, some aspects of the facilities for teaching physical education are unsatisfactory. In particular, the sports field is in a poor condition and this restricts the development of skills by pupils. The condition of the toilets, particularly for boys, is poor.

106. There is good day-to-day management of the school site. An effective in-house team provides the capability for the various refurbishment programmes and for building projects such as the attractive new reception area and the planned refurbishment of the library and study areas.
107. The resources to support teaching and learning are now satisfactory, which represents an improvement since the last inspection. In most areas the resources are of sufficient quality and quantity. They are good in science, history, geography, physical education and religious education. However, the use of ICT, although it has improved since the last inspection, is not yet fully developed. The ratio of pupils to computers is still too high. Although the capital resources in design and technology are sufficient, the consumable materials are limited and restrict activities. The library stock is sufficient and pupils make good use of the library.
108. Pupils learning EAL receive their specialised support in a classroom in the main block of the school. This is important as it provides a secure, supportive and stimulating environment for these pupils to learn and make progress. There are wide ranges of resources available for EAL pupils, including subject textbooks linked to the National Curriculum, multi-lingual materials and the use of ICT and visual equipment.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

109. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The headteacher provides a clear direction and a strong commitment to the continuing growth and development of the sixth form, and to the improvement of standards. Line management arrangements are effective in supporting and monitoring quality. The clear aims and values for sixth form work include a strong focus on equality of opportunity and ensuring that all students achieve well. Much importance is attached to the value of the sixth form in enhancing standards and quality within the school as a whole.
110. Currently the life and work of the sixth form are being re-invigorated and regenerated. The relatively recently appointed head of sixth form and the newly established management team, have, in a very short time, introduced or re-established a number of important initiatives to improve standards and the quality of provision. These include the more rigorous monitoring of students' progress and reporting to parents, improved arrangements for personal study, and enhanced provision for social activities. For instance, the end of year party and trip have been re-instated, and a television and DVD installed in the common room. Students greatly appreciate these developments and are playing an active part in their implementation.
111. The head of sixth form and his team, the heads of Years 12 and 13 and the deputy head of Year 12, work closely together. They meet regularly informally to discuss operational issues and to plan development. The newly-established procedures for monitoring students' achievement are thorough and are being complemented by improved whole school arrangements for the measurement of value added and target setting. There is scope to increase the role of the head of sixth form in the monitoring and measurement of students' academic progress and the monitoring of sixth form teaching. There is already a strong focus and well structured provision through tutors for students' personal wellbeing.
112. A good start has been made on improving standards and quality. Planning is clearly focused and there is a strong and shared commitment to continued growth and improvement. However, overall the current styles of leadership and management are insufficiently systematic and rigorous in ensuring that development is planned and monitored strategically, and that targets are achieved and their impact evaluated. In particular, approaches need to be more cohesive to ensure that the complementary strengths of the team are targeted and drawn upon effectively.

Resources

113. Educational priorities are well supported through careful financial management. Best value principles are carefully considered in ensuring cost effectiveness. Resources are allocated appropriately to the sixth form. The sixth form accounted for 24 per cent of the school age-weighted pupils' budget in 2001. This was matched exactly by expenditure showing that the sixth form is cost effective. Comparison of income and expenditure with the standards achieved by students indicates satisfactory value for money.
114. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good, and learning resources are also good overall. However there is limited access to up-to-date computers in the sixth form block. Accommodation is good. The sixth form block provides a pleasant and adult learning environment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to continue to raise standards in the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- a) Ensure that pupils and their parents understand how they can improve their work by:
- Implementing the school's assessment policy consistently;
 - Through comments on work and in reports to parents, identify learning targets for all pupils;
 - Enable tutors and heads of year to more effectively support pupils in setting and meeting learning targets.

(paragraphs 39, 46, 84)

- b) Improve the programme of personal, social and health education by:
- Improving the co-ordination of PSHE
 - Improving provision for sex education and education about the misuse of drugs;
 - Ensuring that there are sufficient trained staff to teach all aspects of PSHE.

(paragraph 68)

- c) Ensure that the school's diverse community is fully reflected in all aspects of the life of the school and that all partners are encouraged to take a full part in school affairs by:
- Ensuring that the full range of cultural traditions represented in the school are fully reflected in all aspects of the school's work;
 - Taking action to increase the extent to which parents contribute to the life and work of the school;
 - Enhancing links with local community organisations.

(paragraphs 66, 92-93)

- d) Improve the provision for spiritual education by:
- Meeting statutory requirements for collective worship;
 - Encouraging all departments to address spiritual issues through the curriculum.

(paragraph 67)

Sixth form

- e) In order to continue to raise standards in the sixth form, the headteacher, governors and staff should:
- Introduce strategies to ensure that the teaching offers appropriate challenge for all students.
 - Identify and address specific instances of underachievement.
 - Further improve the procedures for the systematic tracking of students' progress against well defined bench marks, and for setting targets for improvement in standards.
 - Strengthen leadership and management in raising standards by ensuring that procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of sixth form provision are systematic, rigorous and strategic in nature.
 - Improve provision for religious education and students' spiritual development

Other issues that need to be addressed are to be found in the following paragraphs:

6, 7, 12, 34, 46, 81, 99, 100, 101, 102, 105 and 107.

In addition, the school should continue to implement its existing plans for school improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 to 11	159
	Sixth form	68
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 to 11

Number	3	33	68	51	4	0	0
Percentage	2	21	43	32	2	0	0

Sixth form

Number	4	20	31	13	0	0	0
Percentage	6	29	46	19	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1088	280
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	122	N/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	163	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	977

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	95.0
National comparative data	91.3

School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	123	95	218

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	106	91
	Girls	75	77	65
	Total	165	183	156
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (63)	84 (82)	71 (73)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	29 (31)	66 (61)	41 (38)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	109	94
	Girls	71	81	69
	Total	140	190	163
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (69)	87 (75)	75 (75)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (32)	58 (35)	39 (43)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	127	90	217

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	73	121	123
	Girls	62	89	90
	Total	135	211	213
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (70)	98 (95)	98 (97)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	95.7 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.4 (49.0)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	13	48	50	119

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.2	16.2	16.7 (15.7)	-	2	2
National	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	18	100%
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	103
Black – African heritage	31
Black – other	20
Indian	794
Pakistani	77
Bangladeshi	12
Chinese	13
White	166
Any other minority ethnic group	152

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	21	0
Black – African heritage	4	0
Black – other	2	1
Indian	24	0
Pakistani	4	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	17	0
Other minority ethnic groups	6	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	90.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.44

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	382

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.54
Key Stage 4	20.29

FTE means full-time equivalent.

	£
Total income	4,510,866
Total expenditure	4,420,579
Expenditure per pupil	3,313.78
Balance brought forward from previous year	76,653
Balance carried forward to next year	166,940

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28

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

1368

Number of questionnaires returned

359

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	45	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	35	57	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	48	5	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	47	12	4	1
The teaching is good.	32	55	6	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	48	12	2	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	45	7	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	30	50	14	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	38	47	5	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	47	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	48	11	4	7

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The active involvement of pupils.
- The management of the subject.
- Curricular and extra-curricular provision.

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of marking.
- Opportunities for independent work in lessons.

115. The standards achieved by the end of Year 9 are good. They improved between 2000 and 2001 and the 2001 test results in Year 9 are above the national average. This improvement means that the standard achieved is now consistent with schools that have similar characteristics. Taking into account what pupils have achieved before they join the school, overall girls make satisfactory progress through the key stage but boys do not. A very high percentage of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), which is a factor in the lower achievement in English tests compared with those in mathematics and science. Those who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress, especially when they receive additional adult support. Those at a more advanced stage make the same progress as students who have English as their first language.
116. In the lessons observed and work examined, standards achieved by the end of Year 9 in speaking, listening and reading are good overall and are consistent with pupils' prior attainment. Standards of writing are less consistent, with many pupils repeating mistakes in spelling and punctuation. Handwriting is generally good. Pupils readily take part in class and group discussions and in role-play activities. They are confident at reading aloud and are able to identify the characteristics of a range of texts and reproduce them in their own writing. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils learned how to interrogate a text and worked in groups to identify the key features of mystery stories before they were asked to plan their own.
117. The standards achieved in Key Stage 4 examinations are satisfactory. GCSE English results have fluctuated but the general trend is one of improvement and the 2001 results are close to the national average. The results in English literature have been more consistent and are close to the national average. Girls' results are better than boys' and in some years the gap has been wider than the national average. Progress through the key stage is satisfactory, with girls making better progress than boys. Pupils with EAL make good progress.
118. As in Key Stage 3, the lessons observed and work examined show standards achieved in speaking, listening and reading are good and are in line with pupils' prior attainment. Pupils in lower attaining groups have difficulties in developing extended pieces of writing and problems of accuracy persist. Handwriting and presentation are generally good. Pupils make confident contributions to formal and informal activities. They are able to understand and read aloud a range of fiction and non-fiction texts with accuracy and expression and are able to identify a range of stylistic conventions and figures of speech. In a Year 11 lesson on Act 2 of "An Inspector Calls", pupils took the roles of the major characters and were 'hotseated' to answer questions from the rest of the class. Their knowledge of the text and abilities to role-play helped to shed light on the motivation of the characters. Their own writing shows the ability to analyse characters and situations and they are able to sustain an appropriate style through more extended pieces of writing.

119. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress. Teachers are aware of their needs and take account of them in their planning. In lessons where these pupils do not have additional adult support, most teachers provide support materials.
120. Pupils at Claremont enjoy English. They come prepared for their lessons, show enthusiasm and join in activities willingly. Behaviour is good and they show respect for teachers and each other. They are not always given sufficient opportunities to work independently in lessons.
121. The teaching of English is good. It is good in more than four out of five lessons and it is very good or excellent in one out of five. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen during the inspection. It is slightly better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Teachers are enthusiastic, know their subject well and have good classroom management skills. They use a variety of approaches and make good use of drama methods within English lessons. They make good use of a range of questioning techniques and maintain an appropriate pace. They work well with support staff and relationships with pupils are very good. In lessons where teachers do not reorganise groups for different activities, boys and girls tend to sit separately, which limits speaking and listening activities.
122. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress are satisfactory. There are clear systems and marking is carried out regularly. Some marking is constructive, with pupils receiving clear targets for improvement and helpful advice in achieving them but not all teachers do this and practice overall is inconsistent. Similarly, although most comments on reports are clear and constructive, a few are concerned with attitudes and behaviour, rather than what pupils can and cannot do within the subject.
123. The management of English is good. Effective systems are in place and the acting head of department has a clear vision of what needs to be done. The department is big and some teachers have other management responsibilities within the school. Nevertheless, communication is good and they function well as a team, supporting and encouraging each other. The informal system of sampling work and observing lessons needs to be made more systematic so that inconsistencies are identified earlier.
124. The provision in English fully meets National Curriculum requirements, although there is an undesirable number of classes in Year 7 that have more than one English teacher. There is a very good range of opportunities outside the curriculum, including clubs for drama, debating, Scrabble, school magazine, creative writing and visits to theatres and cinemas. Year 10 and 11 pupils are also involved in the writing and performance of a radio play with the actor/writer in residence. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and, although heavily weighted towards word processing, is satisfactory. There has also been improvement since the last inspection in the standards achieved, especially at Key Stage 3 and in the quality of the teaching.
125. Accommodation is good and resources well used. Good use is made of the limited library facilities, which are soon to be redeveloped. Displays of pupils' work would benefit from informative and interactive labelling.

Drama

126. Drama makes a strong contribution to the English curriculum and to the life of the school in general. Standards of attainment are good in Key Stage 3 and drama methods are routinely in use in English lessons. Standards are very good in Key Stage 4 and the samples of pupils' work show a clear progression from description to analysis of their work. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. The topics covered contribute strongly to pupils' moral, social and cultural education. The subject is increasing in popularity. The current allocation of time in Key Stage 3 is insufficient, especially in the light of school's Arts College status. Good use is made of the specialist accommodation, but the digital editing facilities are currently underused. The management of the subject is very good and the head of department has a clear vision of the way in which it needs to develop over the next few years.

Literacy

The English department has adopted a staged approach to the National Literacy Strategy. Schemes of work have been matched to the English Framework and the ten-minute starter activity is being trialled in Year 7 lessons, where it is having a positive effect on the pace of the lessons and pupils' knowledge of language. The department has not yet completed the subject audit, set literacy targets or observed the literacy hour in primary schools. The school has adopted a key words approach to specialist vocabulary across the curriculum and there is positive work in science, geography and art. Sixth Form students support pupils in Years 7 and 8 with their reading in a paired scheme. There are opportunities for private reading during tutorial time and student planners contain a word of the week.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- High attainment in test and examination results; a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection.
- Good teaching, characterised by comprehensive subject knowledge, discriminating use of standard exercises and very effective use of homework.
- Good subject leadership that has laid secure foundations for continued improvement

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in teaching quality, particularly through ensuring that work set matches pupils' needs
- Ensuring pupils understand how they can improve their own work

127. In 2000, the results of national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average and those of similar schools. These high standards have been maintained in 2001, continuing the trend of improving attainment by 14 year olds in recent years. Standards have risen markedly since 1999. Over the past 3 years girls' results have been higher than those of boys.
128. Standards of attainment in mathematics on entry to the school are above average and rising. Even taking this into account the progress made by pupils during their first three years in the school is good. In 2001, at the end of Year 9, the achievement of most girls was good and that of boys and above average girls was very good. These high standards are mainly due to teachers' high expectations and pupils' very good attitude to their learning. Those pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.
129. In 2000, the proportion of 16 year olds attaining A* - C grades in GCSE examinations was well above the national average with girls attaining a larger proportion of the higher grades than boys, generally reflecting differences that existed at the beginning of the course. Standards were similarly high in 2001. Attainment has been high in recent years having improved steadily since the time of the last inspection and at a greater rate than nationally.
130. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11, particularly talented pupils who are taught at a more demanding pace to prepare them for GCSE examinations early. Those who find learning difficult, have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language make similarly good progress and also achieve well. Results in 2000 indicate that by the age of 16, Black Caribbean pupils and Indian girls do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable.
131. There are good standards of work in all years, in pupils' written work and in their work during lessons. The greater emphasis given to the use and application of mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) than at the time of the last inspection now gives these aspects due weight throughout the school. For example, Year 9 pupils use graphical calculators to explore the characteristics of linear functions efficiently. As part of GCSE course work, Year 10 pupils use spreadsheets effectively to investigate relationships between area and perimeter.

132. Pupils' written work reveals a good balance of work in algebra, shape, space and measure, and statistics. Techniques such as changing the subject of formulae often required in the study of other subjects are well mastered. This is clear, not only in the work of above average pupils who can efficiently re-arrange complex formulae, but also in the work of pupils who find learning more difficult. Pupils acquire a good knowledge of technical vocabulary that enables them to talk about their work confidently and without ambiguity.
133. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils can use frequency density to construct histograms and can recognise the features of a normal distribution. They can estimate the degree of precision appropriate in calculations based on measures by considering upper and lower bounds. Lower attaining pupils benefit from extensive practice of techniques and apply them across the full range of GCSE topics. For example, Year 11 pupils can solve problems by finding proportional parts using algebraic procedures. This enables them to maintain high and realistic aspirations of achievement in GCSE examinations.
134. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is generally satisfactory. Teachers initially set straightforward problems that establish pupils' confidence then move quickly on to tasks that make increasing demands of pupils' thinking. They question pupils skilfully. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher began by efficiently checking pupils' competence and recall of primary school work on fractions through brisk questioning. Later in the lesson, the teacher used the accurate assessment made during the earlier questioning to decide which exercises to omit from those available in the text book. In this way the teacher ensured that all pupils worked purposefully and made good progress. Not all pupils benefit from such well-conducted lessons. In one instance, the teacher set questions that took little account of pupils' prior knowledge of plane shapes. Consequently, towards the end of the lessons several abler boys lost interest and interrupted the learning of other pupils. Regular short sessions at the beginning of most mathematics lessons provide opportunities for routine practice. These allow teachers to stimulate pupils' recall effectively before starting the main phase of the lesson, for example identifying gradients of lines before work on coordinate geometry.
135. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good. This is characterised by methodical planning with objectives for learning that are clearly explained to pupils so that they know exactly what is required for different GCSE grades. Teachers expect pupils to use deduction rigorously in developing and expressing general rules. They provide pupils with extensive help and guidance based on their very good knowledge of mathematics and the requirements of GCSE examinations. For example, the teacher in a Year 11 lesson, by skilfully questioning pupils on their existing knowledge of right angled triangles, engaged the pupils in deducing a general formula. Not only were pupils then able to solve similar problems, they could outline the reasoning underlying the formula. Where weaknesses occur in teaching, it stems from shortcomings in planning. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the teacher had not given sufficient consideration to the examples to be used. Consequently, pace was lost while the teacher thought up examples spontaneously to illustrate the central theme. Some were not appropriate and clearly confused some pupils. In this lesson, the group was very well motivated and so most learned well despite these shortcomings.
136. Throughout the school, pupils show a very positive attitude to their learning and are highly conscientious in their work. This contributes significantly to the high standards that they achieve. They work amongst themselves to overcome hindrances to learning. For example, when the teacher is occupied with other pupils, other pupils often discuss their difficulties thereby successfully clarifying matters independently. They develop good work practices including the routine completion of homework to a very good standard. This efficiently reinforces their learning and prepares them very well for the demands of sixth form work.
137. Leadership of the department is good. The subject manager monitors and reviews work well and uses findings to guide further developments. Resulting improvements in the accuracy of teachers' assessments have contributed to the recent improvements of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Test and examination results, including those of different groups of pupils, are carefully analysed to evaluate departmental performance. Priorities for further development such as ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistent across the department and improving pupils' knowledge of their own learning are well founded. For example, whilst teachers' marking is frequent and thorough, written

comments are usually restricted to issues of style, presentation or effort. Pupils are generally well informed about the levels that are expected of them by the end of Year 9 but are not sufficiently clear about what they can do specifically in their current work in order to progress towards their targets.

138. There have been significant improvements since the time of the last inspection with higher standards in test and examination results, greater emphasis on the use and application of mathematics and better use of ICT. A broader range of teaching styles is evident and the quality of assessment has improved. The management of the department has improved considerably.

Numeracy

The maths department has begun the introduction of the national strategy for maths in Years 7 to 9. The initial focus has been on the oral and mental starter. In all years, pupils attain very good levels of numerical competence in maths lessons although a few pupils show a hesitancy in mental computation that is not compatible with their otherwise high standards. However these skills are not always readily transferred to other subjects. Where necessary, such as when pupils have to calculate areas and circumferences of circles in DT, other subject teachers effectively revise the techniques required. Good contributions to the development of numeracy skills are also made by teachers in science and geography. By the end of Year 11 pupils can employ a wide range of numeracy skills and techniques to promote their learning in other subjects.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Rate of improvement since last inspection.
- Improving results.
- Very good subject knowledge of staff.
- Very good subject leadership.
- Commitment of staff in department.
- Very good technical support.
- Pupils' attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Work taking account of pupils' prior knowledge and matching individual needs.
- Developing opportunities for independent learning skills.
- Progress of girls across all key stages.
- Developing the process of lesson observations to ensure the sharing of good practice.
- Inclusion of technical staff in department meetings.

139. At the end of Year 9 standards of attainment in 2000 were above the national average and well above expectations when compared with similar schools. In 2001 there was a slight decline in standards but this reflected the prior attainment of the cohort and results were still the above national average. Boys make good progress across the key stage but the progress of girls is only satisfactory. Attainment is improving at a faster rate than is seen nationally.

140. At the end of Year 11, pupils enter for a variety of examinations. Some 20 per cent of the Year 11 cohort entered for GCSE Biology, Physics and Chemistry in 2000. These pupils achieved the best results in Year 9. Entry to double award science accounted for two thirds of the year group. In all these courses, pupils reached standards which were significantly above the national average and significantly above the average for pupils' other subjects at the school, with the best results coming in the separate science courses. A small number of lower attaining pupils take modular science and all achieved grades A* to G with 7 per cent gaining A* to C.

141. In 2001 attainment in the separate sciences was close to that achieved in 2000. There was a decrease in the standards of attainment in double award science but this reflected the prior attainment of the pupils. When all sciences are taken together the percentage of pupils gaining two A* to C grades in Science is more than 70 per cent. This is above the national average. There has been a good improvement in the numbers of pupils gaining A* to C grades.

142. In their lessons and in written work, pupils in Year 9 are achieving standards that are generally good for their age and are in line with their prior attainment. The more able pupils are starting to make headway with some Year 10 work, for example, in working with chemical equations, while those of more average ability are on course to perform strongly in the Year 9 tests. This shows that the majority have made steady progress during the key stage. Almost all of those studying separate

sciences are working at grades A* to C, as are a good majority of those studying for double award Science. Overall, standards in Year 11 are good. Work seen indicates pupils' very positive attitudes and determination to succeed. These pupils make good progress, for example in Year 10 during a lesson on digestion when they were able to explain the process of digestion including the functions of several organs. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress, particularly when they are in smaller classes where work can be more easily matched to their needs and they receive additional support.

143. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the study of Science and do not give up trying even with aspects which they find difficult. Many Year 11 pupils produce well organised Science notebooks, some of which are exemplary in presentation and detail. The great majority of pupils are hardworking and their behaviour is good, but there is a small minority of pupils who have unsatisfactory attitudes to work and do not try hard enough. Generally, pupils work hard in lessons and complete their homework assignments. They are very co-operative, usually answer questions readily and offer ideas and sometimes ask questions of their own. Concentration is mainly very good. Pupils work well together during their investigations and resources are used safely. Relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are very good. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are fully involved in lessons and make satisfactory progress in both key stages.
144. Overall the quality of pupils' learning is good. Although attitudes and behaviour are generally good, pupils can be rather passive in lessons. Whilst they work diligently, they rarely ask questions to show they are really thinking about the work and developing their skills as independent learners. Overall, attitudes and behaviour were best in Key Stage 3. Science staff, through a good range of extra-curricular activities, further develop pupils' interest in science, for example, pupils in Year 7 Science Club showed real enjoyment and enthusiasm for science and said 'it helps me learn more about science'.
145. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, although in lessons seen teaching varied from very good to one lesson which was unsatisfactory. Over half the teaching was at least good and in one sixth of lessons it was very good. Teaching was good in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In the best lessons, teachers had good subject knowledge and designed activities to assess and build on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher used group work to enable pupils to gain a clearer understanding of the importance of the questions that could be used when designing a key for identifying rocks. Lessons contained a good variety of activities so that pupils' interest was gained and held throughout the lesson – including effective questioning designed to deepen pupils' understanding. Resources were used with a strong emphasis on safe working practices and opportunities to develop investigative skills. The purpose of lessons was explained to pupils with the result that they knew what to do and could work independently through the tasks. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils were asked to find the melting points of various groups of elements. They were able to use information and communication technology to access the information and many then chose to display the results graphically. Good quality marking of pupils' work tells them how they are doing and gives them guidance on how to improve. Homework is well integrated with the lessons and gives opportunities for pupils to continue to learn between lessons. When teaching showed all or most of these features pupils learnt at a good pace, worked hard and took pride in the achievements.
146. In the less good lessons pupils participate insufficiently in the work. On occasions the lessons are conducted at too fast a pace, with pupils not being given time to complete a task before the teacher intervened to provide the answers to the problem set. Teachers sometimes do not ensure, through questioning of pupils, that they build on what pupils already know and understand. Not enough attention is given to those who are capable of working more quickly and to those who would benefit from extra support or different resources. However, the overall good quality of teaching is a strength of this department and there is enough good and very good teaching to be seen there to help all teaching to rise consistently to this quality.
147. The Head of Department appointed since the last inspection provides very good leadership for a hardworking team of teachers and technicians and has ensured that the department has made very

good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous inspection report. There have been important improvements in the type of science courses taken at GCSE, standards of attainment in all key stages, the numbers of pupils entered for GCSE, the number of higher grades at Key Stage 3 and GCSE, support for newly qualified staff and the revision of schemes of work. There has also been some improvement in ensuring that work takes account of pupils' prior knowledge but this still needs further development. The technicians provide a very good service to the department and are very well qualified.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes and learning, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The leadership of the subject.
- Accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- The active participation of pupils in introductions to lessons.
- Reflection on what has been learned at the end of lessons.
- The use of ICT as an artistic medium, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- More detailed action planning with more sharply defined targets.

148. Standards in art at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are average and there are no significant differences in the relative attainment of boys and girls or different ethnic groups. GCSE results over several years have been consistently at this level with the exception of the 2000 results which were unusually low. This was the result mainly of over-severe internal marking following the introduction of the new GCSE assessment, and staffing difficulties in the department, since resolved. At both key stages, current pupils' finished artwork is often above average. However, while pupils can talk fairly well about their understanding of concepts and features in their work they are weaker at recording these as part of their supporting sketchbook work. However, sketchbooks at Key Stage 4 show good development of visual ideas and techniques. Pupils' progress in all year groups is in line with their prior attainment in art and is satisfactory.
149. Many pupils in the main school use the visual elements imaginatively, working confidently in a range of media and styles, both on individual and group pieces. They use ICT for basic research using CDROMs and the internet. For example, in one Year 9 lesson, pupils were working in groups to produce large-scale designs inspired by a range of cultures in order to embellish their three-dimensional 'survival structures'. Several groups used the computer to look up and print out examples of artwork from India, Africa, China and other countries. They successfully used these as a basis for their own designs. At Key Stage 3 they also create some simple but effective desktop publishing and computer image manipulation but this is not taken further at Key Stage 4.
150. The better work in Year 11 shows good drawing skills and individually creative use of the visual elements, particularly colour, leading to some strikingly expressive work. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils interpreted the theme 'Inside' using different media, such as pastels, glued and painted sand, and paint. Some pupils created well-drawn studies showing unusual viewpoints, interesting textures or tonal contrasts.
151. Teaching is good overall at both key stages. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching noted in the last inspection report has been eliminated. Teachers know their subject well and plan effective lessons within consistently applied schemes of work, another improvement since the last inspection. Introductions to lessons are very successful in setting the work in context and explaining what to do and how to do the activities planned. However, teachers do not consistently engage the pupils actively in consolidating previous learning or giving their ideas for the work ahead. Likewise, there is insufficient whole-class reflection on what has been achieved or learned, particularly at the end of

lessons. This occasionally happens during a lesson while pupils continue with their practical activity and this practice needs to be more consistently applied. Teachers do give well-targeted and timely support to pupils on a one-to one basis which is effective in enabling them to improve their work. They have good relationships with the pupils and manage them well. Classroom routines are well established and consistently applied, enabling maximum use of the time available. At Key Stage 4, teachers relate pupils' individual work well to exam requirements.

152. Pupils generally respond well in lessons and their attitudes at Key Stage 3 are very good indeed. Pupils behave very well, are attentive to the teacher and follow classroom routines efficiently. Their good motivation leads them to apply a good deal of creative effort to their work, concentrating well during lessons and taking great care even though they often work at a pace faster than usually seen at this stage. Pupils participate willingly in discussion when given the opportunity and co-operate very well when working on the frequent group projects that are a feature of the Key Stage 3 art curriculum at Claremont. Many of these characteristics also apply to pupils' attitudes at Key Stage 4, particularly in Year 11. There is less formality in lessons here as teachers expect pupils to be developing personal commitment to the subject and taking much more responsibility for their own work. However, some pupils have not yet learnt the self-discipline needed to sustain good quality work in this atmosphere, particularly in Year 10, where some boys in one lesson displayed very immature behaviour and lack of motivation.
153. The art curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3 there are good features such as the range of topics that enable skills and concepts to be developed in reasonable depth, a focus on developing pupils' understanding of concepts and vocabulary through the use of key words and ideas, an emphasis on social development through group projects and good provision for developing creativity and imagination. At Key Stage 4, creativity and imagination are further encouraged and linked well to examination requirements. The department now needs more overtly to build into its schemes of work the progressive development of pupils' written evaluative and analytical skills in order to remedy the weakness identified in this area. ICT is used appropriately for research but computers are not used enough as a medium for art work.
154. The department is well led. There has been good progress on issues from the previous inspection including the development priorities for the department, which are now arrived at through a more formal process of departmental discussion. Although developments are tracked, there has been little systematic evaluation partly because targets for development are too vaguely worded to support this. Action plans are currently insufficiently detailed and do not sufficiently supplement the existing overview documentation or contain sharply focused success criteria. Accommodation is good with all teachers having good access to good-sized, well-lit and appropriately sited teaching rooms. This learning environment has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching and breadth of subject expertise offered across the department.
- Strong leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- To develop a better system for challenging and stretching higher attaining pupils.
- To ensure all machinery is correctly labelled to meet fully the health and safety requirements.

155. The design and technology department has been subject to staffing difficulties in the past two years and this has resulted in a number of temporary staff being employed to cover classes. This has clearly had a detrimental impact on standards in these classes and on the stability of the department. However, the newly appointed head of department, who started in April 2001 together with the other full-time staff in the department, have worked hard and are having a positive effect on the quality of work undertaken at the school.

156. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 show that the results achieved by pupils are now broadly in line with national expectations. This is mainly due to the revised courses and development of sound design and practical skills that have been introduced recently by the department, for students in Years 7, 8 and 9.
157. There is a good balance of projects within the design and technology curriculum. Pupils at Key Stage 3 design and make products in resistant materials, graphic products, structures, food, textiles and systems and control. Students develop a good range of practical skills in making products and are improving their design drawing skills. They show an ability to transfer their design skills between each material area.
158. Pupils' attainment by Year 9 is satisfactory. Examples of their assignments include: a motorised model vehicle with an hydraulic lifting mechanism, a mechanical toy made from cams, bridge structures, cushion, bag and hat designs in textiles and a variety of food projects. This work is effective in developing their design experience. They test and evaluate their own products at each stage of their development. Pupils are well supported in planning their work by using detailed worksheets. As part of the graphics course, pupils develop a range of two and three-dimensional drawing skills. All pupils extend their skills and techniques considerably and also apply them in other areas of technology. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils used graphics skills to design a promotional video cover. Higher attaining pupils combine these skills well with notes to explain each stage of their work. All pupils used a good range of technical vocabulary in their written tasks and when explaining their work. Lower attaining pupils applied all the basic skills to improve the overall presentation and quality of their work. In textiles, pupils scan their designs into a computer and then print onto special paper to transfer their creation onto fabric to make a cushion. Pupils are beginning to use ICT more to research and present the information they used in their design projects as well as processing information they collected on surveys. However, this is inconsistent across the subject.
159. The GCSE results in 2001 indicate that the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C was well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. There has been an increase in the results since 1999. Pupils achieved better in their GCSE examination in design and technology than they did in many other subjects in the school. Results were particularly high in Resistant Materials, Graphic Products and Textiles.
160. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress. Pupils are working at least in line with national expectations, with a substantial number working at a higher level. This represents very good achievement, particularly taking into account the difficulties in the department in previous years. Pupils use a wider range of investigation and research skills and evaluate strengths and weaknesses effectively as they progress with their design ideas. They develop work of good quality. For example, in resistant materials, pupils considered the design of a laminated chair with respect to its shape and construction and the possibility of making multiple copies of the same design. All pupils work well to extend the depth and accuracy of their planning. Coursework includes a good level of numeracy, for example through questionnaires in food and textiles technology, in which pupils collect and process the views and preferences of others. Pupils analysed the data well as part of the development of their own ideas and presented the information using ICT in the form of graphs and charts to show how it was used to influence their work. Some pupils make good use of ICT in producing headings, labels, textual information and design diagrams in their design folios, and using the Internet to research aspects of their coursework. Higher attaining pupils produced good quality products supported with accurate, well-developed plans. All the work reflected a high degree of research. Pupils evaluated their work well against the specification they formed for the designs. Higher attaining pupils worked accurately and in depth. Lower attaining pupils designed products well suited to the courses and were supported by their teachers to complete work that was well matched to the examination requirements.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. In over half of the lessons seen, teaching was very good and in 15 per cent of lessons it was excellent. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use stimulating methods, enabling pupils to understand basic skills. In a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the teacher used an electrical controlled vehicle as a basis for pupils to

develop the basic skills of measuring, marking out, cutting and drilling wood as well as increasing their knowledge of mechanisms using belts and pulleys. The pupils worked enthusiastically and learning was good. Teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and achievement. However, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to extend their knowledge and skills, especially in the mixed ability classes. Middle attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the individual support that they receive. Some teachers succeed in stretching pupils of all levels of attainment, but this is not consistent across the department. All teachers place a good emphasis on developing technical vocabulary at the introduction to lessons, when pupils explain their work and record their findings; this is having a positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and work hard for them. They behave well and are highly motivated. The pace of lessons is appropriate in most lessons.

162. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection, when provision for the subject was found to be unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are now good and there have recently been considerable improvements in planning, teaching and standards. All pupils follow a technology course and the curriculum meets statutory requirements. Standards are now in line with national expectations in Year 9 and above them in Year 11. Teaching is also very good. The Key Stage 3 scheme of work has been rewritten and mapped against the National Curriculum programme of study and now covers systems and control. The department has put in much effort to develop work for pupils in computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. Teachers are providing a better balance between designing and making. Pupils are now clear about the learning objectives for each lesson. Design methods have improved across the subject. Making skills have also improved. Assessment systems have improved and are now beginning to inform planning and help set targets for raising pupil attainment. There is a strong focus, shared by all, on raising standards in what has become a strong departmental team.

163. The teaching accommodation is excellent with bright stimulating displays and provides a good range of specialist equipment. Funding for the consumable items to support pupils' design and practical work is well below the national average and this restricts the variety and scope of projects currently on offer. There is a technician, who makes a significant contribution to the quality of provision to pupils' learning. He is approached frequently to support other parts of the school and consequently is not available to fully support the increasing work of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards in both key stages.
- Progression in numerical skills.
- Good quality of learning through active enquiry and a high standard of collaborative work.

Areas for improvement

- Increased provision of fieldwork opportunities in Key Stage 3.
- Development of use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

164. Standards at the end of Year 9 are good with pupils being assessed as achieving well above national expectations for the last three years. In 2001 girls outperformed boys at Level 5 and above and boys performed better than girls at Level 6. In Year 7 pupils show a good grasp of mapping skills and methods of measuring distance and proficiency in these skills is supported through opportunities to apply them throughout the key stage. In Year 8 pupils show a secure understanding of the interplay of physical and human factors in assessing the suitability of different locations for a car plant and an open cast mine. Most pupils can identify key features on Ordnance Survey maps of different scales, use geographical data effectively in presenting an argument and draw and label diagrams with precision. Overall pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a good understanding of geographical vocabulary. In Year 9 pupils show a particularly good knowledge and understanding of tectonic processes. Work on

a case study on Bangladesh showed that pupils could combine their knowledge of river systems and the causes of flooding to produce detailed and well-illustrated accounts and explanations and identify possible strategies for flood prevention. Throughout the key stage pupils show a high level of competence in the use of numerical skills to present, analyse and interpret a wide range of geographical data.

165. GCSE results have improved steadily over the past three years and are now slightly above the national average. Girls achieve well in relation to boys although this is close to the difference found nationally. Standards in class are good overall. In a Year 10 class pupils produced in a timed activity very good presentations on alternative methods of coastal protection with detailed and accurate illustrations and were able to evaluate the physical, economic and social aspects of the schemes put forward by other groups. In this lesson pupils demonstrated a high level of skills in the interpretation of maps, photographs and text as well as confidence and clarity in delivering the reports. In Year 11 pupils demonstrated their competence in the interpretation of population data to test hypotheses on the changing distribution of megacities. Numerical skills are good and are demonstrated in a wide range of contexts including flood hydrographs and contrasts between less and more economically developed countries such as differing dependency ratios. Much of the coursework generated by the GCSE fieldwork on Epping Forest is very good and some exceptional. Pupils are able to write substantial and detailed reports covering the history of the area, its location, a study of different field sites, the methodology used in testing the hypotheses, a presentation of the results using ICT and conclusions. Comparative work on the locality is also very good overall.
166. Pupils make good progress across Key Stages 3 and 4. They show growing competence and confidence in the use of geographical skills including the use of geographical vocabulary. Mapping skills are well developed by Key Stage 4 and progress in numeracy is a strength of the department. Diagrammatic work continues to improve as pupils move through the school, assisted by clear expectations by the department on the quality of illustrative work and labelling. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Where tasks and learning materials have been adapted for pupils of lower ability this enhances their progress, particularly in understanding and skills. In a Year 11 lesson on population change the intensity of support provided by the teacher through expectations that were appropriately high, clarity of explanations and targeting of individual pupils who required more help than others resulted in significant gains in learning within the lesson.
167. In all lessons pupils show positive attitudes to the subject and to the teachers. They respond well to the high level of support provided by the teachers and participate fully and enthusiastically in collaborative work and role play. In group work pupils show responsibility, share ideas and listen to one another. In many lessons pupils were encouraged to discuss in pairs or groups and during such activities they remained on task and focused. Behaviour was at all times exemplary.
168. Teaching overall is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and good in Key Stage 4. In all lessons observed in the Main School the teaching was satisfactory or better, and in one third it was good or better with one lesson being excellent. All teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and proficient in a wide range of teaching strategies. Collaborative work is expertly managed with good use made of the teaching space. All lessons were well planned and had clear aims which were shared with the pupils. In some lessons learning resources had been adapted to meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils. In some lessons questioning could have challenged a greater number of pupils and in some lessons there was no review of learning at the end. All work examined had been marked in accordance with departmental policy. However, the assessment policy should be reviewed to ensure a more rigorous monitoring of pupils' performance against the National Curriculum Levels. Although ICT is used by some pupils it is as yet undeveloped as an integral tool for teaching and learning. This should be addressed. The introduction of the 'Kidlink' unit in Year 7 is a valuable means of teaching geographical location and the physical and human characteristics of different places as well as providing an opportunity for e-mail contact between the pupils and schools in different parts of the world.
169. The scheme of work in Key Stage 3 is based on the National Curriculum. However, the expectations of the National Curriculum in respect of fieldwork are not reflected in the current programme which

should be extended to include, for example, greater use of the school itself and the immediate locality. Some skills such as the interpretation of data on river discharge should be acquired through field study in order to reinforce the understanding of concepts and processes. The department makes a significant contribution to the school's teaching and reinforcement of numeracy.

170. The department is effectively and energetically led by a recently appointed Head of Department who has a commitment to maintain and further improve standards and to develop the curriculum. He provides strong and supportive leadership and is well supported by the Teacher in Charge of Key Stage 3 Geography. The department works well as a team. Policies and procedures are consistently followed and staff are mutually supportive. Good use is made of the flexible accommodation and the standard of display is impressive. Since the last inspection, standards have risen at both Key Stages and work is now better matched to pupils' needs, including those with special needs.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching throughout the department.
- Marking of work and use of formal assessments.
- Very positive response of pupils to active learning in class.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use of fieldwork and visits in line with the National Curriculum Order for History.
- More consistency across the department in the adaptation of learning resources for pupils with different levels of attainment.
- More opportunities for the use of ICT.

171. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Girls perform better than boys at this stage but this reflects national gender differences. Sound foundations are being laid in Year 7 with work on chronology and historical sources and most pupils are able to write detailed narrative accounts of the Norman Conquest, including an evaluation of the rights of claimants to the English throne. By Year 8 pupils are able to make links between such events as the agricultural, industrial and transport revolutions and show a secure understanding of cause and consequence. In Year 9 much good work was seen in pupils' studies of both the battle and the home fronts during the First World War with some formally assessed work achieving a very high standard, in some cases using ICT. Overall pupils show a sound knowledge of the course of the war and in-depth investigative work both in class and as homework is strengthening their understanding of specific aspects such as trench conditions and the changing role of women at home.

172. In 2000 80 per cent of pupils achieved A*-C grades at GCSE. Attainment has fallen since then but is in line with national averages. In 2001 all boys entered achieved a grade in the examination. The standard of work seen is at least sound and in some cases good and very good. Pupils use and understand narrative texts to acquire an overview of such topics as the Weimar Republic, the League of Nations and appeasement and much work on the rise of Nazism and on apartheid in South Africa is good. Pupils are competent in analysing and comparing sources and in making connections between events. They show sound background knowledge. Many topics studied in Key Stage 4 elicit an empathetic response and this is reflected in the quality of discussion and the interest shown through written work. The adaptation in some classes of learning materials to assist pupils of lower ability promotes higher attainment. Throughout the key stage there is very little unfinished work.

173. Progress is at least sound across Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. However, there is an insufficiently strategic approach to the adaptation of learning materials for the less able and for those of the highest ability. Pupils show increasing confidence in the use of historical concepts and terms and in chronological awareness. Previous knowledge is often used in discussion. Note making could be further developed to assist pupils, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4, to reinforce independent learning skills. Progress is assisted by the targets that are written by teachers when marking work.

174. Throughout the school, pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject. In all classes pupils were attentive, concentrating on their work, working positively and co-operatively with others and enthusiastic about sharing their work with the class as a whole through presentations and reports. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour. In the main, work in exercise books is presented neatly and attractively with headings and dates. Many pupils invest much time and effort in presenting their work to a high standard, including the use of ICT, and this is particularly evident in the formal assessments.
175. In all lessons observed the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. In one third it was good and a similar amount teaching was very good. Overall the quality of teaching is good. All teachers have sound subject knowledge. In almost all lessons, a detailed lesson plan had been prepared and the aims were shared with the pupils. In some lessons the aims were not reviewed at the end of the lesson. ICT has yet to be developed as an integral tool to enhance teaching and learning and this needs to be addressed. In all lessons, a range of appropriate teaching strategies was used including much active learning and collaborative work. A Year 7 lesson on the Bayeux tapestry included the making of a 'word web', a short video and work with a copy of the tapestry. Paired work on sources in Key Stage 4 was used effectively to assist pupils in interpreting sources through the sharing of knowledge, understanding and ideas. Homework is used effectively to encourage investigation and to consolidate learning. All work examined was marked in accordance with departmental policy, frequently with detailed comments and with a set target to help pupils improve their work and develop their understanding and skills.
176. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and opportunities are being taken to review the scheme of work with the aim of introducing a unit on multi-cultural Britain which would include a local perspective. There are at present insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn history from first hand experience through visits and fieldwork and this should be addressed.
177. The department is effectively led by the Acting Head of Department who sets a good example as a class teacher. He is well supported by a team of committed staff who share the priorities of high standards of teaching and learning and improved attainment. The departmental handbook is detailed and comprehensive and departmental meetings are regular and purposeful. Among the strengths of the department are the structured and planned approach to assessment and the consistency in the application of the marking policy. Departmental rooms are well-ordered with a high standard of display and are used effectively for different styles of learning.
178. Since the last inspection excellent progress has been made in the use of collaborative work and the development of rigorous assessment procedures. Good standards of attainment have been maintained. Further work needs to be carried out on the use of ICT. This will be assisted by the completion and the implementation of the ICT development plan for the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- New ICT Policy helps to add a strategic coherence to the provision of ICT at the school.
- The network system is efficiently managed and provides good curriculum access around the school.
- Discrete ICT courses in Years 7 and 9 help to raise pupil's ICT attainment.

Areas for improvement

- The school needs to ensure that it meets the government target of a computer for every 7 pupils by August 2002.
- There needs to be a better monitoring system for tracking pupils use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 across the curriculum.

179. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated that students' attainment was well above the national average. These results were found to be an over-estimation, in comparison with the pupils' current work. Currently, pupils in Year 9 attain standards in line with those expected nationally. Across the key stage their progress is satisfactory. In lessons, pupils demonstrate competence in using word processing software, spreadsheets and databases, and they cover a small element of control technology within design and technology and data logging in science. They search for information using both CD-ROMs as well as the Internet. In Year 8, the present curriculum provision relies on pupils developing their ICT skills in other subjects. This work is well coordinated by the head of technology, who has established an ICT development group with a representative from each subject. Pupils at all levels of attainment achieve basic competence in the skills covered in subjects. Pupils can use databases and spreadsheets and are able to set up a spreadsheet, enter data and use formulae to calculate results. Higher attaining pupils are able to explore the results of their calculations further by varying the data they use. Pupils at all levels of attainment are able to explain the work they are doing and have a good level of understanding. They use a good range of vocabulary appropriately and accurately when describing the detail of their work.
180. There is no external examination data in ICT at Key Stage 4 for the last two years. The scrutiny of pupils' work, displays, discussions with pupils and evidence of ICT covered across the curriculum show that pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieve standards which are broadly in line with the levels expected of them nationally. This represents satisfactory achievement when compared to their prior attainment and taking into account the weaknesses found at the last inspection. Students apply a range of skills and demonstrate greater depth in their understanding. They are able to evaluate and comment on their progress and overall success of their own achievement as well as identify ways of improving further. Students increase the complexity and depth to which they work and this was seen in a Year 11 music lesson where students were using an interactive score writing program to help them compose music. All students demonstrate good knowledge of the software and the ability to use complex facilities, such as setting up a table of contents. With spreadsheets they are able to use formulae to perform the calculations they need. Higher attaining students are confident and are able to test their designs and identify how they could improve their models.
181. The quality of teaching is good overall. This brings about good learning in lessons. Teachers show a good level of planning and preparation and are well organised. In most lessons there are clear objectives which help give a focus for students' learning. Teachers explain the technical language of the subject well and encourage students to use it correctly, both in their work and when they talk about their work. This is particularly important where there are students with English as an additional language who benefit from the opportunity to extend their vocabulary. Teachers produce worksheets that are helpful in moving the students' learning forward when they work through projects. These do not always, however, challenge higher attaining students fully. As a result, higher attaining students do not always work at a level that is suitable for their needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and direct their questioning well to assess how much the students learn and understand. This also helps to raise the level of concentration of students in lessons. Teachers use interesting topics on which to base the learning and, as a result, students respond well to work in class. However, in larger classes, some students have to share computers in lessons and this often slows the pace of learning.
182. The use of computers in other subjects is increasing. Each department has produced an ICT policy to support the learning in their subject area. In mathematics, teachers use ICT well to promote the understanding of a variety of mathematical concepts. Students use interactive materials from the Internet to support work on Pythagoras and regularly use spreadsheets when handling mathematical data. In Personal Social and Health Education, pupils use ICT to research information on health and explore issues relating to drugs, smoking and alcohol. In religious education, pupils were enthusiastic about using the computers in the library to find out information about Diwali, which was celebrated during the inspection. There are examples of similarly effective use of ICT in music, art, English, science, history and geography. However, the use of ICT is not sufficiently consistent or widespread in these and in other subjects. For example, there is insufficient hardware to allow adequate work on measurement and data logging of practical experiments within the science laboratories.

183. The school has addressed a number of issues since the last inspection and has made satisfactory progress. All pupils have specialist ICT lessons in Years 7 and 9. In Year 8 pupils study ICT through their other subjects. The curriculum audit demonstrates that the programme of study is covered across the key stage and now meets statutory requirements. At Key Stage 4, opportunities are provided to cover all the ICT programme of study either through the "Thomas Telford" GNVQ course or through other subjects. Monitoring of pupils' ICT work across the curriculum is at an early stage of development and there is not yet a tracking system in place to ensure that all pupils cover the full curriculum. There has been a significant improvement in the use of ICT in maths, English and with pupils who have special needs. These areas were all criticised in the previous report. Teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' capability and set more complex tasks. Computer facilities are being better used, but there are occasions when rooms are not used. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not consistently assessed and their progress is not reported to parents. Schemes of work are developing but they do not yet include sufficient guidance on planning activities to meet the needs of pupils across the broad ability range in each class.
184. With the recent appointment of the new head of technology, the leadership, management and co-ordination of ICT have improved significantly. There is a new ICT policy, which is comprehensive and outlines an appropriate vision for development. The New Opportunities Fund ICT teacher training programme is progressing well and teachers are using their newly developed skills and knowledge of new "online" learning materials to enhance learning in their subject areas. The school needs to plan for the achievement of the government's target of a ratio of one computer for every 7 pupils using the expected funding from the LEA through the Standards Fund.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department.
- The subject knowledge and skills of the teachers.
- Standards achieved, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- The management and monitoring of the use of ICT.
- Training in new initiatives and sharing good practice.
- The identifying of learning objectives and targets for pupils.

185. In both French and German, the proportions of pupils in 2000 gaining A*-C grades at GCSE were above the national average. Overall, the performance of girls was better than that of boys. The French results for 2001 showed continuing improvement but fewer pupils sat the examination. In 2001 the German results fell but the number of pupils taking the subject was higher. In 2001, at the end of Year 9 the number of pupils reaching the expected level in the teacher assessment was slightly below the national average. Girls did markedly better than boys at that age.
186. In Key Stage 3 French most pupils are attaining the standard expected nationally. There is a range of performance with some pupils working well above this level and one Year 9 class of lower attaining pupils where are working below expected levels. Pupils are able to manipulate the language, as in a Year 7 class where the pupils were questioning each other about themselves transposing 'tu' and 'il' for 'je'. In Year 11 French standards in lessons are satisfactory overall with pupils working at nationally expected levels, except in one higher group where standards are good. Pupils have good listening skills and concentrate well. In some classes their accents are good. In Year 11 pupils produce more extended written work than in earlier years.
187. In German by Year 9, most pupils are at least at expected levels. They have good listening skills and are able to repeat words and phrases with correct accents and intonation. They are happy to say aloud new words without embarrassment. At Key Stage 4 there is a wider variation in standards. In

two Year 11 and one Year 10 class the pupils are achieving below expected levels at this point. In one Year 11 class they are well above expected levels. Overall attainment in lessons is satisfactory and is in line with pupils' prior attainment. Where pupils have a clear understanding of the criteria for each grade, they know what they are aiming for and how to get there. Accents and listening skills are generally good.

188. Learning by pupils at all levels ranges from very good to satisfactory and overall is good. In all lessons observed, the pupils made gains in understanding and in the development of their language skills, particularly their listening skills. For example, in two Year 11 classes, one French and one German, the pupils were able to help spontaneously with forgotten words, to politely correct mispronunciation and to respond to the teacher's questions on their classmates' spoken work. Pupils at Key Stage 4 respond well when given opportunities to produce extended speaking. The best written work was produced when pupils had the chance to explore material first orally. There is little evidence of extended reading. Most pupils use their textbooks and dictionaries to support their learning, although some of the less able classes are very dependent on their teacher.
189. The majority of the pupils have a very positive attitude to the learning of languages. Their good behaviour and keenness to work create an atmosphere that greatly aids learning. They are generally very supportive of each other even when mistakes are made. In a Year 9 French class the pupils were working in pairs, producing appropriate language dealing with school equipment and were checking each other's accuracy in a helpful, supportive manner. In only one class observed, a Year 10 German low ability group with 15 boys and 4 girls, did unsatisfactory behaviour interfere with the learning. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are very good. When given the opportunity, pupils can work independently and be more creative.
190. The teaching overall is good and ranges from very good to satisfactory. In all lessons observed there were good features in the teaching. The teachers all have excellent subject knowledge and understanding. Many of them are equally proficient in French and German. They work hard, set high standards of work and behaviour and transmit their enthusiasm to the pupils. In the best lessons there was a brisk start, with the objectives of the lesson made clear; a good pace maintained and a variety of activities covered. The teachers who consistently use the foreign language as the medium of instruction, as in a Year 9 French class, ensure that the pupils are developing good accents and intonation. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good it was because the over use of English is impeding the pupils' development. Examples of good teaching included reinforcing lesson objectives in a Year 10 German class, using games to get pupils to use productive language in a Year 7 French class, the use of mime to show school subjects in a Year 9 French class and the pointing out of patterns to a Year 8 French class when teaching sports. However, not enough opportunities were given for pupils to become more independent learners and less reliant on their teachers.
191. The progress of all pupils is good, including those with special needs. In the lower ability groups, less gifted pupils are given the opportunity to follow the same curriculum as all pupils. All are given the chance to study two languages in Years 8 and 9 so that they can choose one to study to GCSE level in Key Stage 4. Very few pupils continue with two languages at Key Stage 4. Pupils who have English as an additional language are often at an advantage in a language lesson, especially where the foreign language is used. Many of the pupils who had the best accents had a home language that was not English.
192. The department is more than meeting its statutory obligations. The teaching of two languages to all pupils in Years 8 and 9 is now quite unusual. In line with school policy, the ICT provision is targeted at Year 8. The ICT co-ordinator in the department has ordered new software and produced some worksheets for use by all teachers. She needs to monitor the implementation of the plan by other teachers and arrange necessary training. The assessments, especially end of unit tests, are used to monitor progress and plan further work as well as determining the sets. Lesson planning is as yet insufficiently focused to ensure that all teachers set clear learning objectives and share meaningful learning targets with pupils.

193. The department is extremely well led and managed by a Head of Department who is a very good teacher himself. The work of the department has improved since the last inspection, especially with regard to the French examination results. The accommodation and resources, such as textbooks, Foreign Language Assistants, overhead projectors and tape recorders are available and well used. The only under-used resources are the 13 computers. The department offers a very wide range of trips and activities which significantly enhance pupils' learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Management of the department.
- Extra-curricular provision.
- ICT use.

Areas for development

- Raising standards at Key Stage 3.
- Further development of the multi-cultural dimension of the curriculum.

194. Music provision in the main school is satisfactory overall. This judgement reflects a balance of strengths and areas for development seen during the inspection.

195. Standards at Key Stage 3 as measured by the most recent teacher assessments are in line with national averages. However, standards observed during the inspection were clearly below national expectations. Pupils in Year 9, for example, work in the keyboard lab to practise and record a simple backing track with chords, bass and electronic rhythm pattern. Most pupils were able to use the keyboards to produce chords and record their backing track, but many were unable to stay in time with the pulse of a simple electronic rhythm pattern and few were able to talk about the task adequately using an appropriate musical vocabulary. Standards in Year 8 were also below national expectations. In contrast, Year 7 pupils were observed working at levels at least in line with national expectations. One Year 7 class, for example, entered enthusiastically into a creditable three-part vocal rendition of a song accompanied by percussion instruments. The reason for the difference between the teacher assessments and the standards observed during the inspection is that teacher assessments are not matched accurately enough to National Curriculum levels.

196. Standards achieved in GCSE have shown a falling trend in the past four years and the latest results are now below national averages. These results, however, must be analysed with care as they represent the performance of small groups of examination pupils. In fact, during the inspection, the standards observed at Key Stage 4 were above national expectations. The difference between past results and standards observed during the inspection can be explained partly by the recent change in the management and status of the subject and partly by the higher average ability levels of the current GCSE classes. Pupils in the current Year 11, for example, work confidently with the "Sibelius" programme in one of the school's computer suites - composing minimalist style pieces and ground bass variations which were of a good GCSE standard. Pupils were able to talk enthusiastically and intelligently about the musical techniques they were using to achieve their musical aims. These pupils have made good progress.

197. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons was satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Where learning was good, in Year 11 for example, pupils were working hard and productively during lessons to improve their compositions. They were self-motivated, keen to discuss their work with the teacher and each other and responded positively to constructive feedback. In Year 7, many pupils worked effectively within the whole class group to learn and perform an African song. They then worked productively in small groups to arrange, practise and perform their own arrangements of the song. At the end of the lesson they were able to make constructive comments about their own and others' performances and arrangements. Where learning was not good, in some Year 9 lessons for

example, many pupils appeared bored or intimidated by the tasks set. A significant minority of pupils engaged in off-task activity and were slow to follow instructions from the teacher. As a result learning in these lessons was patchy and outcomes disappointing. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour overall are good at Key Stage 4 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3.

198. The quality of teaching is now a clear strength of the department. All lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better – around two thirds were good or better and one-third were very good. The Year 7 lesson on African music was a typical example of good practice. This lesson had a clear structure and clear aims, which were explained to the pupils at the beginning and end of the lesson. It included opportunities for pupils to work productively as a class and in small groups where identifiable individual contributions were required. The teacher managed the learning well, organising space and resources effectively, using musical terms while discussing the work with the class, asking open questions and encouraging pupils to create, perform and offer ideas in both small group and class situations. The teacher showed a personal interest in the lesson content while demonstrating and explaining clearly the musical concepts. This led to an enthusiastic response from the pupils. As a result, virtually all pupils were fully engaged in learning throughout the lesson and made good progress. When teaching is less good, the teacher does not succeed in fully engaging the pupils, partly because tasks are not properly matched to their attainment and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to express their own creativity. All music lessons observed during the inspection were planned and delivered so as to be accessible to pupils of all levels of attainment and from different ethnic backgrounds.
199. The schemes of work are being revised and are not yet complete, but those parts which are in place address all aspects of statutory provision. Singing and composition, which were criticised at the last inspection, are now clearly in place. The formal curriculum is enhanced by a significant level of successful instrumental provision and a full programme of extra-curricular opportunities, including junior and senior band, choir and orchestra. The department offers pupils a number of opportunities for performance – including the annual musical production and a range of other events throughout the year. The only significant criticism of the music curriculum is the relatively low profile of multicultural music. No Asian instruments are offered as part of the instrumental tuition programme, for example, and the displays in and around the department do not reflect the vibrant musical and cultural diversity of the school's pupils and the local community. The school's general music accommodation and resources are only just adequate at the moment.
200. The school is determined to raise the profile of music in the school through its Arts College initiative. Music is at the centre of the school's ambitious plans to become a centre of excellence for performing arts. Plans to substantially enhance music staffing, accommodation and resources are at an advanced stage. The Arts College initiative and the effective management now provided by the head of music in partnership with the school's senior management team offer the prospect of improved quality of musical education and higher standards in the future.
201. Since the last inspection, standards in music declined but have now begun to improve significantly. This is illustrated by the standards achieved in Year 7 and in examination classes. Standards in other year groups are rising but are not yet at a satisfactory level. Teaching is now good overall.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above the national expectation
- There is good provision for extra-curricular activities and individual pupils and teams attain very high standards in district and county competitions
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and they have good relationships with their teachers

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation to allow pupils' learning to be fully effective

- Schemes of work at Key Stage 3 to include opportunities for pupils to engage in independent and evaluative tasks
- Assessment at Key Stage 3 to reflect the new national curriculum levels
- The progression and continuity of learning for those pupils in classes who are taught the same activity by 2 different teachers

202. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is below national expectations because they have little experience of dance, gymnastics and fitness activities. By the end of their first unit of work, Year 7 pupils have made good progress in all but gymnastics and their attainment overall has risen to be in line with national expectations. Boys in Year 7 have sound basic skills in basketball and their short passes are reasonably accurate. In gymnastics, boys and girls work constructively with a partner but their movements lack quality and control. When playing football, girls in Year 8 have an awareness of how to move into space to receive the ball. However, their progress is hindered by the need to work on a sloping playground. At the end of Year 9, boys and girls, attain levels that are in line with national expectations. The majority of boys in Year 9 understand the basic skills of rugby but lack consistency in their ball handling and passing skills. In dance, girls lack tension and levels in their work but they can compose a sequence in small groups and are prepared to repeat and refine their movements. Pupils are reasonably fit and know the reasons for warming up and stretching. They are given little opportunity to do this independently because activities are frequently led by the teacher.
203. The 2001 results for the short GCSE course were well above the national average and the attainment of girls was better than that of boys. Pupils took the course over two years and their allocated study time was the same as for a full GCSE in other subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining well in the practical aspects of the GCSE course. They have a good knowledge of health and fitness and play badminton with skill and a clear understanding of the rules. However, their play is hindered by the size and shape of the school hall which only has space for two full sized courts. Boys and girls in basketball and netball attain standards that are above average. They have good shooting skills and have a good knowledge of the rules and tactics. The notebooks of pupils in Year 11 are very neatly presented and well organised. However, a very few boys sometimes fail to bring their books and do not always file their previous notes.
204. In the statutory lessons, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining at a level above that expected nationally. A minority of boys attain above the expected level in badminton, football and basketball and the majority of girls attain above the expected level in netball. In Years 10 and 11, girls have good co-ordination, agility and a secure knowledge of the rules. Boys and girls do not develop their evaluative skills sufficiently and there is a lack of guidance in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in the units of work.
205. Individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in netball, basketball, football and athletics. The attainment of these boys and girls is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the extra opportunities provided by their teachers.
206. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was all satisfactory or better, with 15 per cent of lessons being good and 23 per cent of lessons very good. All lessons include a health and fitness section in the form of a warm up and stretching section and the very good lessons give pupils the opportunities to acquire new skills, to select and apply these skills and to evaluate their own work and that of others. Opportunities are not frequently provided to enable pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, for example, games lessons are very performance based and pupils are not set tasks which analyse performances. The use of additional sources of reference in the form of prompt sheets or work cards would promote this aspect of the national curriculum more fully. It would also help to set pupils of different abilities tasks that are matched to their needs. The poor state of the school field makes it difficult for teachers to manage a good balance between all the strands of the national curriculum. A few classes have two teachers for the same activity and this does not promote continuity in pupils' learning.
207. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. This is the result of the good subject expertise of their teachers who are able to give good demonstrations and provide pupils with clear visual images of performance

skills. In the majority of lessons teachers circulate well to extend the more able and to help those pupils finding the activity difficult. In a few lessons, teachers divide pupils into ability groups. This is a positive strategy which promotes the learning of all pupils. In a basketball lesson it helped four less able boys to extend their passing skills because they were able to play at their own pace and speed. Overall pupils with special educational needs participate fully and make progress that is comparable to other pupils.

208. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and pupils' attitudes are good overall. This positive approach helps their learning. Boys are mostly keen and enthusiastic but a few boys, especially in Years 9 and 11 do not participate regularly in activities. The positive attitudes of the majority of pupils is reflected by the numbers who have opted to take the subject at GCSE level, and in the numbers who attend extra-curricular activities.

209. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The Head of Department is new to the school and is still developing curriculum and assessment strategies. He has supported the new members of staff well and has monitored all teachers in the department. Assessment procedures are developing to reflect the new National Curriculum levels but criteria are still mainly based on performance indicators and pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work. There is no link between the school's assessment criteria and the national levels at Key Stage 3. The schemes of work lack detail, for example in indicating the strands of the National Curriculum and teaching methods or highlighting opportunities to teach literacy and numeracy skills. There is scope for broadening the curriculum to take account of the sporting interests of different ethnic groups.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Some very good and excellent teaching.
- Good examination results in GCSE.
- Good responses on the part of the pupils.
- Good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for development

- Insufficient specialist teachers to meet the needs of the department.
- Teaching objectives are not always clear to the pupils themselves.
- More religious input to some lessons.

210. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 is above average. The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the central beliefs and practices of Christianity and several other world religions. They have a good grasp of technical language and they can use it appropriately. The older pupils also have a good knowledge and understanding of many moral and social issues, such as human rights, medical ethics, drugs and the environment. They are not, however, sufficiently clear on the approach religions might have to these issues rather than just having an understanding of them in isolation. The pupils can discuss and reflect about a wide range of religious issues including concepts of God, religious leaders and how religious belief manifests itself in practical ways in the home and in the community. A particularly good aspect of their attainment is their ability to see the relevance of what they are studying to their own lives and experiences. The pupils also have good written skills. Overall they make good progress.
211. At GCSE in 2000 the pupils did better than was expected given the limited amount of time they have in Years 10 and 11. The results of the GCSE examination in year 2001 were above average. Of the pupils who took the examination, 68 per cent gained grades A* to C. The results have been above the national average in the last three years.
212. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 is also above average. This is despite the limited amount of time that many pupils have for their study. The pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam and they can talk fluently and intelligently about a range of issues found in both religions. The pupils are also aware of the main differences that exist between them. The pupils are good at discussion and they can readily use religious language and understand the specific religious concepts associated with their areas of study. Their written skills are also good. The pupils can consider many of the religious issues raised by the examination syllabus from more than one point of view. They make good progress across the key stage.
213. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language is generally good as, in some lessons, work is specifically matched to their needs. This enables them to progress at an appropriate rate. This approach is not however found in all lessons. Similarly, extension work for the more able is not always available.
214. Overall, the attitudes of the pupils are at least good and often very good. The pupils are well behaved and show an interest in their work. They concentrate well and in the main they are able to sustain this concentration. In the few instances where concentration is lost, this is usually the result of the pupils not being entirely sure of what they are meant to do or where the work is insufficiently demanding. The pupils show respect for each other and for the teachers. They are also respectful of the views and beliefs of others. The pupils are willing to respond verbally to the work in the lessons and are equally willing to produce good written work. They are also happy to reflect and consider how their study might have relevance for themselves.

215. Overall the quality of teaching is good, although some 30 per cent is satisfactory and more than 40 per cent very good. In all case the lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. At times, however, the learning objectives are not clear enough to the pupils and so some concentration and momentum in the lessons are lost. This results in some wasted time and so the learning in the lessons is not as extensive as it could be. In some lessons the religious content is not sufficiently central to the lesson but is rather an additional item added to it. This is needed to help the pupils' learning in preparation for their exams. Some teaching also has an insufficiently firm 'presence' in the classroom and does not always lead the learning but rather follows the pace of the pupils. On the whole however, the pace and expectations are good and so the pupils learn a lot in the time available. The teachers do well in challenging the pupils to make personal responses to the work they are doing. Homework is set and the books are regularly marked.
216. In the first three years of school, the pupils follow a scheme of work based on the locally agreed syllabus and the amount of time available is roughly appropriate for it. In Years 10 and 11 the pupils follow a full GCSE course. The amount of time available is well below that normally available for a full GCSE course although it is broadly sufficient to meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Some time is lost in Year 10 when pupils take time off from their religious studies to do a half term of personal development study. Some pupils take religious studies as a GCSE option and so more time is available for them.
217. The department is very well managed. However, a significant amount of teaching is done by non-specialist teachers. The documentation of the department is very good and comprehensive and includes schemes of work, general policy documents and targets for further development. Progress since the last inspection has been good in that religious education now meets statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 but it still does not meet statutory requirements in Years 12 and 13. The department makes very good use of information and communication technology both in administration work and in the pupils' own work for research and information processing. The department makes a valuable input to literacy both in the introduction and explanation of new words and phrases and through some extended writing and research reading. The department also contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in its study of world religions and many moral and social issues. The accommodation and resources are good.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	40	90	89	38	45	5.7	6.0
Biology	34	79	88	21	34	4.1	5.3
Physics	18	94	88	33	41	5.6	5.7
Business Studies	21	100	91	52	30	7.4	5.3
Economics	22	64	88	14	36	2.7	5.4
Art	4	75	96	0	45	4.5	6.4
Music	2	100	93	0	35	4.0	5.7
Theatre Studies	9	67	N/a	0	N/a	2.2	N/a
Geography	12	92	92	33	37	5.5	5.7
Sociology	0	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Psychology	20	90	N/a	30	N/a	4.8	N/a
English Literature	14	86	96	21	36	5.3	5.9
English Language	12	75	92	8	31	2.7	5.4
German	3	100	92	100	41	9.3	5.9

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	9	100	N/a	78	N/a	11	N/a

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	13	70		46		0	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, physics and biology, but work in chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, examination results were average in 2000 and most students did as expected considering their GCSE results. Teaching is good, students are keen to learn and make good progress. This was reflected, for instance, in a Year 13 lesson where students confidently carried out an experiment on the redox reactions of tin, making good application of their knowledge of electronic structure and acid-base reactions to the reactions of Group IV elements.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; current standards of students' work are above average.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Subject management is good.

Areas for improvement

- Engagement of students in more challenging reasoning in lessons dominated by demonstration and exercise.
- Consistency in the achievements of different teaching groups.

218. In 2000 the results of A-level examinations were broadly average. The school has been successful in recruiting a higher proportion of girls than is found nationally in recent years and their results were above those of boys in 2000. However, in 2001, while overall results were broadly average, fewer girls followed A level courses than usual, and their results were below average. This untypical group of girls did not achieve the standards of which they were capable. Generally however, both boys and girls regularly achieve well when compared to their GCSE results. Some teaching groups, in both statistics and mechanics, achieved markedly better than others. Students who re-sit GCSE examinations achieve above average results.
219. During the inspection, above average standards of work were evident in lessons, in students' written work and during discussion with students. Algebraic techniques are learned well in pure mathematics so that by Year 13 students can apply them widely. For example, by using calculus, they carry out thorough analysis of trigonometric, polynomial, exponential and logarithmic functions. In statistics, formal notation is used well so that their applications of binomial, Poisson and normal distributions are clearly presented in both written assignments and tests. For a few students, enduring difficulties with the algebra of surds hinders their progress in trigonometry and calculus.
220. The standard of work of present Year 12 students is above the average expected at this stage of the course. Much of the early work consists of thoroughly learned routine algebra. Students recognise the value of this but some are moderately critical of the pedestrian approach. The more able in one group are particularly keen to engage in more extending and challenging work. Whilst students are competent in handling techniques in isolation, they are less efficient when they apply them in different contexts.
221. Students complete three modules in Year 12, two pure and one of either statistics or mechanics. Many find this demanding and the standards attained are not reliable indications of their final A-level grades. A small number of students study the modules of further mathematics alongside pure mathematics in Year 12 which presents some difficulties initially when more profound concepts require secure mastery of work not usually covered until later in Year 12.
222. Teaching is good in both years. Teachers plan work carefully and engage students in purposeful discussions that promote achievement of high order analysis and understanding. For example,

through particularly close questioning, a teacher fully engaged students in the derivation of the sample mean using the central limit theorem. As a result, some students were able to deduce the sample variance without further guidance. In some instances, the pace of teaching is not so demanding especially when the lesson is over dominated by demonstration and exercise as when a teacher in a Year 13 lesson worked slowly through some straightforward and repetitive applications of the laws of momentum conservation. During this students were impatient to make more rapid progress.

223. The good leadership and management of the subject are resulting in improving standards. The subject manager analyses results thoroughly, monitors standards and identifies appropriate areas for development.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Recent results in 2001 were in line with national averages which represented an improvement over results for 2000.
- AS Level results in 2001 were better than other sciences at school and showed good achievement
- Teaching is good; lessons are well planned, teachers have good subject knowledge and expectations of students are high.
- Teachers are very approachable and are always prepared to help students in and outside lessons.
- The subject is well led and new schemes of work linked to assessment are being developed.

Areas for improvement

- Girls underachieve compared to boys.
- Lack of ICT use in lessons.
- Further but more rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- Greater opportunities for students to discuss and debate issues and to bring some quieter students more into discussion.

224. The GCE Advanced level examination results in 2001 were in line with the national average. This represented a significant improvement over the results in 2000 when they were below average. Most students did better than was expected on the basis of their GCSE results. However the number of entries in 2001 was down by almost a half in comparison with 2000. The number of students studying GCE Advanced level (A2) this academic year however has increased significantly. The 2001 GCE Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) results are better than other AS level results in sciences in the school. Students achieve well overall in comparison with their GCSE results, but girls achieve less well than boys.

225. The standards of work of students in Years 12 and 13 are average at this relatively early stage of the courses. In Year 13, students are generally achieving in line with the predictions based on their GCSE results. The work of Year 13 students shows a good coverage of topic areas and evidence of personal notes and study. Their understanding of the topics covered is sound. This was shown in one lesson in their assessment of fungal growth and ability to link this with dry-mass determination of fungi in liquid culture; and in another lesson in their understanding of the significance of the structure of bacterial cell walls in identifying bacteria.

226. Most students in Year 12 have good understanding of the properties and functions of enzymes and are able to remember and recall facts from their previous GCSE course. Some students are able to calculate the rate of enzyme activity using a graph with increasing confidence. In one lesson students displayed knowledge about cell division and some of the differences between sexual and asexual reproduction. Overall, students are settling well and successfully moving on from their GCSE coursework into new but challenging areas.

227. Teaching is good and learning is good as a result. In the lessons observed, good teaching was characterised by clear planning and learning intentions, good subject knowledge, appropriate pace and high expectations. This inspires confidence and motivates students to learn. Where teaching is weaker, as in one Year 12 class, students are not fully drawn into discussion actively by the teacher, they make a limited contribution to the lesson and, as a result, their learning suffers. Opportunities are missed to use ICT to present results of experiments and to aid learning. Homework and examination questions are usually marked but some independent course notes made by students remain unchecked for errors.
228. Students have very good attitudes to work. They work well independently. They respond well to the teachers' generous offer of help with their work during lunchtime and after school to better their understanding of biology. Students also benefit from the very positive teacher-student and student-student relationships that exist which contribute to a good learning environment.
229. There is a good commitment to improving standards, and the good teaching and learning result from the subject being well led and managed. The continued improvement in standards is well supported by the new schemes of work which reflect subject requirements and specifications, and is closely linked to good assessment procedures. There are also early signs that assessment at the end of each module is having a positive affect on achievement. Valuable information is available on the attainment of students in relation to their prior attainment, gender and ethnicity. However, at present it is not fully analysed and used to guide planning for instance, to redress underachievement amongst different groups of students, for example, the girls who do less well than expected at GCE Advanced level.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Good achievement by students given their GCSE grades.
- Good individual help and guidance provided to students both in and outside lessons.
- Marking and feedback are constructive and well related to examination requirements.
- Very good leadership.
- Very good technical support.

Areas for improvement

- Work meeting the needs of all individuals.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills.
- Use and sharing of data with pupils to support progress and encourage individual goal setting.
- Achievement of girls.

230. The numbers of students studying physics at GCE Advanced level (A2) and GCE Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) level are steadily rising. GCE Advanced level results in both 2000 and 2001 matched the national average. Students did significantly better in physics than in their other subjects and a little better than would have been expected from their GCSE results. AS results were better than predicted. In comparison with GCSE performance, students achieved well at both A2 and AS except for a significant number of girls who underachieved in comparison with their attainment at GCSE. Retention rates are good with the majority continuing the A2 course in Year 13.
231. Overall the standards of work of the current students are average at both A2 and AS. The quality and quantity of work from Year 12 last year are sound. Work available from students who have continued to Year 13 shows a further improvement in standards in the first few weeks of this academic year. The lessons and work observed show strong teacher direction. There is evidence of practical work, hypothesising and application of knowledge but the latter, at this stage of the year, is in the early stages of development. Students in Year 12 have recently started the course and most show understanding of conservation of momentum and elastic collisions that would be expected, although

weaker students struggle to complete simple mathematical equations and use units that would be expected at GCSE.

232. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher made good use of the time available and effectively used data logging equipment to demonstrate conservation of momentum. In a Year 13 lesson students effectively carried out a timed practical with accuracy. Students were then able to draw on the knowledge gained to explain in another experiment what precautions to take to ensure that results were reliable. Key skills are starting to be embedded in the course through activities such as the researching of topics and the presentation of them to others. Students are confident in using books and information and communication technology. They approach their work maturely and most are able to extract information and make their own notes when given the opportunity, for example, on the action of a capacitor. A few are less confident in seeing the focus of tasks where explanations are needed. The principal features of good teaching observed are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace, work matched to students' needs and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and the tasks set. The lesson on dampened oscillations of a mass spring system included a timed practical which required students to work individually and accurately within an agreed time, opportunities for them to work together to check their learning, application of their ideas to a new situation and effective explanation and drawing together ideas by the teacher. Students responded confidently and enthusiastically to the changes of activity. Of the four lessons seen, two were not as dynamic and, although sound, overall did not result in such secure learning.
233. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In a Year 12 lesson they rose to the challenge of explaining their answers in a mechanics test which challenged misconceptions. In lessons, time is used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning. They are not always confident in offering ideas in more open discussions and the weaker students are not always brought into question and answer dialogues as much as they could be. There is a strong commitment to teaching and learning and a range of resources is used to support this. A scheme of work links examination objectives with lesson plans and a good range of support materials is being developed. Further development of the range of learning activities and structured support to develop independent learning skills are also needed.
234. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being very well led and managed. There is a strong commitment to build on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The scheme of work effectively reflects the subject requirements and sets the stage for good teaching. It identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. Target setting based on careful analysis of students' performance is being developed although the targets are not yet sharply enough focused on specific learning goals. They are not yet shared at an early enough stage with the students to enable students to set their own learning goals and aim for the highest possible standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

There are no courses in this area.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business education and economics.

Business Education

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

Strengths

- Results at GCE Advanced level and in the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education.
- Teaching - clear and well structured lessons.
- Regular emphasis on study skills.
- Frequent assessment and progress monitoring against individual performance targets.
- Well structured use of work experience.

Areas for improvement

- Balance between teacher led lessons and opportunities for independent study.
- Consistent use of attainment and effort grades and improvement targets.
- Provision of more opportunities for individual feedback and progress review.
- Outcomes for Intermediate GNVQ.

235. In Years 12 and 13 the school offers both GCE Advanced level (A2) and GCE Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) Business Studies and the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE) and Intermediate level GNVQ in Business. Attainment at A level and AVCE was well above average over the three years to 2000 with a slight decline in performance in 2001. Even then, students did better than was suggested by their GCSE results. At AS in 2001 40 per cent achieved A-B which is above average compared with the latest published national figures. Attainment in Intermediate GNVQ is average overall. Numbers in this course are small and a minority do not complete the qualification within Year 12. Standards in current Year 12 and 13 classes are good. Students are developing a good understanding of the key concepts and knowledge in the subject.

236. Teaching is good and well organised. Aims and objectives are clear; students are reminded of the links between topics and their knowledge is frequently checked through question and answer and tests or practice questions. Clear explanations of content and tasks are provided. The interchange with students is generally lively although the predominant use of questioning only involves some members of the class. Class groups are quite large, sometimes in excess of twenty, and teachers manage these large groups well, giving time to all in the group during the one hour classes. Most classes also involve some individual or small group work and case studies and visits are used where appropriate as additional stimulus. Video was effectively used in one lesson to reinforce and develop thinking on the 'marketing mix'. Teachers also draw well on students' knowledge of organisations to relate experience to theory. At the same time they are trying to broaden students' knowledge of their environment and its history in order that course topics can be evaluated in a contemporary and national or international context. Work experience provides additional learning and reinforcement in AVCE and GNVQ programmes.

237. Students are clear as to what is required of them in lessons. Their behaviour and cooperation in class are excellent. They have a lively and enquiring approach to their subject. Their attention to the task is good. The majority keep well-ordered files although some Year 12 have yet to acquire note taking skills. The majority are articulate and clear thinking although this is not always evident in whole class discussion where a minority dominate. Students' would welcome fuller guidance on their performance and more opportunity for individual discussion on it.

238. The good provision for business education results from the good leadership and management of the subject which forms part of the business and social science faculty. The head of business is also head of this recently formed faculty. Work is guided by regular planning meetings as well as frequent informal contact between teachers. There is a departmental handbook which combines school policies and interpretation and development of these to fit subject requirements. Schemes of work are also available; these concentrate on content. Information or guidance on methodology, resources, assessment and the integration of key skills. There is a well developed policy on assessment and feedback although this was not evident in all students' work files. The statement on ICT is also general and no direct use of ICT was observed during the inspection of the subject although there is

evidence of its appropriate use during the courses. There is a limited ICT facility for students within the sixth form centre and specialist suites elsewhere in the school are used as required. Accommodation within the sixth form block is adequate overall, but a few rooms are too small for the groups in this subject.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned.
- Students' attitudes to the course are good.

Areas for improvement

- Results are below the national average, although better in 2001 than in 2000.
- Students reading of economic journals and good quality daily newspapers to improve their knowledge and understanding of topical issues.
- The application of economic theory to case studies, actual organisations and the real economy.

239. Results in the GCE A level economics examination over the last four years had steadily improved until 2000 when they fell to well below average. However, the 2001 results were better although still below average. Results in 2001, when compared with students' attainment in GCSE two years earlier, show satisfactory achievement.
240. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work was close to but still below national averages and reflect their AS results at the end of Year 12. All but 2 of the successful 27 students who passed this examination have elected to continue the study of economics to A Level (A2). Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of economic theories and concepts as in a lesson comparing competition and monopoly in terms of economic welfare, using supply and demand analysis. In Year 12, students have made a good beginning to the AS level economics course and standards are in line with national averages. In both years students showed good numeracy skills and used appropriate graphical techniques to analyse markets. Indeed these skills are better developed than the skills of written communication. Whilst some higher attaining pupils can write extensively, using the higher skills of evaluation of evidence and making reasoned judgements, there is little extended essay writing. There is little evidence of wider reading of a topical nature and insufficient use is made of the internet as a source of information. Students show satisfactory oral communication skills, including those for whom English is not their first language.
241. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The teachers' expert theoretical knowledge contributes to the quality of learning and underpins discussion. Good use of questioning makes students think for themselves. Opportunities are taken to reinforce and link knowledge learned earlier and lessons are well planned to ensure a good structure to ensure effective learning outcomes. Where teaching is less effective there is an over-dominance of the lesson by the teacher who spends too much time talking. Teachers do not always keep a balance between the teaching of theoretical concepts and the application of these to today's economy.
242. Economics is a popular subject with students and numbers taking the A level course have remained large enough to run 2 classes in both Years 12 and 13. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged to be above the national average on the A level economics course. This level of attainment has not been reached over the past 4 years and currently standards are no better than average.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There are no courses in this area.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

There are no courses in this area.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There are no courses in this area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art, music and theatre studies.

Overall the quality of provision for art is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and their learning is very good.
- Students drawing skills are well developed and they work confidently on large-scale projects in a range of media.

Areas for improvement

- The facilities for and use of ICT as an artistic medium.

243. Cohort numbers are too small to make reliable comparisons with national figures but work seen during the inspection taken together with individual results over several years show that attainment is above average. Although the 2000 and 2001 cohorts achieved as expected in the light of their GCSE grades, the work of some current Year 12 students shows rapid progress from their previous work at Key Stage 4. Much current work shows the positive influence of the life classes attended by 6th form art students. This work shows very good drawing skills generally and imaginative use of shape, form and colour. Sculpture is creatively pursued to a well-developed level. Sketchbook work is confident and wide-ranging, imaginatively developed and some shows in-depth understanding of the work of the artists chosen for study.
244. Teaching is very good. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to explain complex concepts and techniques clearly and enable students to integrate these with their own understanding. Individually tailored input is carefully aimed at helping students to develop their own ideas and skills appropriate to the direction their work is taking. Students respond excellently to this provision, displaying very mature behaviour and dedication to the subject. They work with great concentration and take a good deal of responsibility for their own work. They are generally very confident in working at large-scale projects across a range of different media.
245. Students at this level benefit greatly from several additional aspects of provision. They have their own studio space where they can lay out their work, leave it safely between sessions and continue with it outside scheduled lesson times. Saturday workshops, occurring generally twice a month, provide additional experiences in life drawing and sculpture. The department organises an annual visit to a European artistic centre; last year students visited Florence and a trip to Paris is planned for the coming spring term.
246. The good provision for art results from good leadership and management which provides a clear direction for its work and the achievement of good standards. The only weakness in provision is the lack of sufficient resources to enable students to use ICT, both as an additional artistic medium and also as a contemporary means of extending their visual awareness. The department possesses only one computer with appropriate software and peripheral devices for its own use and this is not situated in the sixth form art studio.

Music

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and their learning is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Take up for AS level needs to be improved in the context of the school as a specialist performing arts school.

247. Although results have been below average for the past three years, most students are now reaching above average standards. Cohort numbers are too small to make reliable comparisons with national figures. The majority of current Year 12 and 13 students have a good understanding of harmony and can analyse harmonic progressions at an appropriate level. They have a good grasp of technical concepts and the vocabulary used to describe them. They are making good progress in understanding music history and their performing skills are good. Standards of aural work in Year 12 are as expected or better for this stage of the course. Composition projects show good understanding of harmony, texture, motif development and instrumentation. One was competently scored using a sophisticated ICT program.

248. Teaching is very good and results in very good learning. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to explain complex concepts and techniques clearly although in one Year 12 lesson the pace was rather too fast for the student present to take everything in. Teachers take advantage of the small numbers of students currently taking courses at this stage to tailor their input to students' individual needs. Students respond excellently to this provision, displaying very mature behaviour and showing great interest in the subject. They engage willingly in discussion, showing especial confidence in Year 13, and also pursue their musical interests outside lesson time.

249. The appointment of a new head of department is resulting in greater drive and clarity in taking the work in music forward. Ambitious targets have already been set to increase recruitment to sixth form music courses as part of the school's specialist performing arts plan. This plan was written at a time of uncertainty over the future leadership of the subject. Now that a new head of music is in post, planning can be even more firmly founded and specific for instance, in identifying the measures and time scale, for increasing the numbers of students taking music in the sixth form.

Theatre Studies

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

Strengths

- Results are improving.
- Well-informed teachers are developing a comparatively new subject with energy and enthusiasm.
- Support for practical work as part of a faculty of Expressive Arts in a Performing Arts College.
- Continuing links with the English Department strengthen the work being done on the theoretical and literacy aspects of the syllabus. Work in Theatre Studies is well supported by extra-curricular activities.
- There is a very good small drama studio with adjacent hall/ theatre.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation. The classroom, used for some lessons, does not allow movement or easy interaction.
- The occasional tendency to emphasise aspects of the syllabus, which approximate to an A Level English course at the expense of the active and practical theatre element.

250. Theatre Studies at GCE Advanced level was added to the sixth form curriculum four years ago. In 2000 nine students entered, and results were poor: only one student attained above a D grade and three students were unclassified. In 2001 there was improvement, with four of the seven students attaining A-C grades. Currently, twelve pupils are studying AS in Year 12 and two in Year 13. Eight are preparing for the A2 examination in Year 13.
251. Evidence from the lessons seen and files examined indicates that standards are rising steadily. The AS students in Year 12 are achieving appropriate standards in this first term and they show good understanding of course requirements. In a practical lesson they responded confidently to drama disciplines, improvising freely and making varied use of mime, movement and voice. Students of all abilities worked with equal concentration, demonstrating in their practical work a sound grasp of some of the Artaud and Stanislavski theories they were studying. Standards in Year 13 are in line with students' prior attainment. These students, at an early stage of work on the text of *The Tempest*, were helped to focus and articulate their response by skilful teaching. Their reading of a scene showed sound understanding of language and theme. Written work shows greater variation in competence and attainment but it is clear that a good range of regular writing is required from all students, submitted and carefully marked.
252. Teaching is good, often very good, and teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, with clearly defined objectives, which students understand, and good links are made with previous learning. Teachers have high expectations. They make demands on students' vocabulary and understanding which are both challenging and stimulating, and students respond well to these. Comparing two film versions of a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, students in Year 12 made increasingly extensive and pertinent contributions in response to the teacher's encouragement and well-judged comments. This lesson would have benefited from being in a space, which allowed more interaction and general discussion. An excellent drama studio provides such a space but it is not available for all lessons. In another Year 12 lesson, the studio space was used fully and effectively but in a Year 13 lesson some opportunities were missed when it was used very much as a classroom. But these good Shakespeare lessons would have been even better if a practical element, however brief, had been included.
253. Students, like their teachers, enjoy the subject and work with a will. Attitudes and response are consistently good. A sense of shared pleasure and discovery is an important feature of the lessons and visits to theatres and professionally-led workshops extend students' experience and awareness. The school's own tradition of regular and varied stage performances makes an important contribution to work in Theatre Studies, enabling students to work as a team with pupils from other parts of the school. Several sixth-formers were taking part in a lively and well-directed rehearsal for the current production during the week of the inspection.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, sociology and psychology. Lessons in history were also sampled. Students are achieving well in history. GCE Advanced level results were above average in 2000. Similar standards were achieved in 2001 and are reflected in the work of students currently in Years 12 and 13. Students' knowledge and understanding are sound, shown, for example, in their grasp of political movements in Britain and Ireland throughout the nineteenth century. They can access advanced texts, carry out independent research and share their knowledge, understanding and ideas with enthusiasm.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching
- The quality of geographical investigation by students

Areas for improvement

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning• Monitoring of students' progress between AS and A Level |
|--|

254. In 2000 attainment at GCE Advanced level was slightly below the national average with boys outperforming girls. In 2001 attainment fell with the percentage of pupils achieving A and B grades half that achieved nationally, with girls outperforming boys. However, students made good progress compared to their GCSE results.
255. In the present Year 13 standards show an improvement on those indicated by the 2001 A Level results. These students were the first cohort to take the new Advanced Supplementary examination and good results were achieved with 44 per cent of students being awarded A and B grades and 94 per cent awarded a grade within the A to E range. Their current work is of a similar standard. Most pupils show a high level of engagement with topics such as globalisation and the contrasting features of less and more economically developed countries. They can describe and evaluate the impact of transnational corporations on the economies of less developed countries and show a developing understanding of such organisations as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They are able to access a wide range of sources including relevant web sites to obtain information for their work on case studies, and in their written work most students show a sound understanding of relevant concepts. In a lesson on land dereliction good use was made of prior knowledge of, for example the effects of positive multipliers and students demonstrated an appropriately high level of learning skills. A small minority of students are, however, not reaching the standard required at A level.
256. In Year 12 standards are good overall. Students can make a case for and against coastal protection and the relative advantages of hard and soft engineering. They use a repertoire of investigative and presentation skills to develop a strategy. This work is supported in most cases by a sound and accurate knowledge and understanding of physical processes and the relevance of such factors as land value. In the unit on change and conflict in rural Africa most students showed a good grasp of the social, economic and environmental consequences of the spread of AIDS. Students are proficient at interpreting complex data and are beginning to understand the concept of short, medium and long wave disasters. Overall, comparative work on less and more economically developed countries is of a good standard.
257. Detailed studies of coastal processes undertaken last year show the positive impact of fieldwork on standards. Reports are of good quality with sound applications of statistical methods in order to present findings relating to beach profiles in order to draw conclusions on the impact of wave energy and longshore drift. Many reports were very well illustrated with a high standard of mapping and diagrammatic work.
258. Good progress is made by sixth form students who build on their GCSE performance by improving their overall knowledge, understanding and skills. This is particularly noticeable in their development of concepts, wider global knowledge, environmental awareness and numerical proficiency. A small minority of students who have received relatively low grades at AS Level and are proceeding to A Level require more targeted support in order to improve their progress; a mentoring scheme should be introduced for this purpose.
259. Attitudes to the subject are very positive and relationships with teachers are excellent. Students appreciate the high level of individual support provided by teachers in the department and the time devoted to this outside teaching hours. Students show interest and engagement with the subject, particularly through their active participation in collaborative work and, when invited to do so, present their findings and ideas to others with enthusiasm and humour. Students showed particular interest in such topics as Tourism and in the environmental issues explored in the sixth form programme of study. Fieldwork was recognised as a major contributor to individual standards as well as being an enjoyable educational experience.
260. In all sixth form lessons observed the quality of teaching was very good and in one lesson it was excellent. The very good teaching is having a positive impact on students' learning and the improvement of standards. The best lessons provided an appropriate combination of challenge and

support, opportunities for students to share their knowledge and understanding and to take responsibility for their own learning through pair or group research and investigation. Teaching is authoritative and well planned with assessment tasks that are designed to contribute significantly to students' learning. Although students access web sites in their research and investigative activities and are required to e-mail assignments to teachers, ICT is only partially established as a tool for teaching and learning and this should be addressed.

261. The department is effectively and energetically led by a recently-appointed Head of Department with substantial experience of teaching sixth form geography. Sixth form teachers set high standards of planning, organisation, monitoring and student support. Departmental rooms are effectively used to support a range of learning styles appropriate for sixth form teaching and the use of particular learning resources such as individual map sections and photographs.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Lively, supportive and knowledgeable staff.
- Regular feedback on performance.
- Emphasis on study skills and examination practice.

Areas for improvement

- Clarification of policy on teaching methods, assessment, key skills and ICT and their inclusion in schemes of work
- Review of support provision for students with a predicted borderline pass level

262. Sociology is offered at GCE Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary levels. Over the three years to 1999 attainment was below average. In 2000 there were no Advanced level candidates. The subject is now reinstated. The 2001 results and the work seen during the inspection indicate average attainment in both Years 12 and 13. Students' achievement is satisfactory when compared with their GCSE results.

263. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. It has clear aims and objectives and lessons are clearly structured. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. There is appropriate emphasis on reading beyond the syllabus, on analysis and maintaining a glossary of technical terms associated with the subject. Baseline and subsequent knowledge and understanding is frequently checked. Study notes plus worksheets provide a basic subject guide for revision purposes. Teaching styles are appropriately varied for the topic and teaching often models study and revision skills as well as dealing with the subject content. Teachers take the opportunity to develop themes raised by students but keep a firm grip on the requirement to maintain progress within the curriculum. They encourage student attendance at relevant conferences and meetings with examiners. However consistency in practice varies and needs to be supported by a clear policy on teaching methods

264. Students show a lively interest in the subject, are committed to it, are able to contribute to discussion and in the main produce written work to the appropriate standard. Able students can extend thinking well beyond the initial lesson presentations and in their written work provide extended answers which demonstrate wide reading and critical analysis of texts. Their attention in class is good and most can sustain individual or group work until a task is completed. Good use is made of peer discussion and support in lessons, for example, in tackling a series of questions on religion and social change set as a reinforcement to earlier learning but in the frequent question and answer sessions a minority of students take an active part.

265. There are now three subject teachers, which enables the continuation of the AS/A programme. They are supported through the business and social science faculty and their own formal and informal meetings. Attention has been paid to developing regular assessment and feedback and to the extension of subject policies within a departmental handbook.

266. Leadership and management are satisfactory but there is not yet a clear picture in schemes of work of the teaching and assessment methods appropriate to all parts of the syllabus. The integration of key skills and their assessment is also progressing, particularly in Year 12. While no direct use of ICT was observed, there were references by staff and students to its use in the curriculum. Neither of these areas is yet systematically written into schemes of work.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; very good subject knowledge results in the effective questioning of pupils and in the constant reinforcement of their ideas.
- Students have a sound grasp of concepts and are achieving well: they answer routine questions in class with maturity.
- The subject is well led and a very good range of learning resources has been built up.

Areas for improvement

- The key skills of communication, application of number and information and communication technology are not yet identified in schemes of work.
- Regular and systematic testing is under-developed.
- Individual subject specific targets for students are not yet in place.

267. For the three years from 1998 to 2000, A level results have shown a steady improvement so that by 2000 they were broadly in line with the national average. The most recent results in 2001 however were lower especially in the proportion of A-B grades. However this group of students did achieve their expected grades overall, based upon their GCSE performance.
268. Work seen in Year 13 lessons and in students' files shows that standards are again rising. Students are achieving well and can use behaviourist, psychodynamic and social learning theories to explain personality development. They are able to criticise the decay theory of forgetting very effectively but their knowledge and understanding of different models of memory are less well developed.
269. The AS results for 2001 were similar to the A level results for 2000 in the proportions of students gaining A-E grades and A-B grades which indicates that attainment was in line with the national average or better. Students in the present Year 12 are doing better than would be predicted from their GCSE performance. This is supported by evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files. For example, they are able to explain abnormal behaviour in terms of the behavioural, psychodynamic and cognitive theories of psychology well.
270. The teaching is good and the students learn well as a result. The principle features of the teaching are very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm for the subject, thorough and effective questioning techniques and the effective use of spider graphs as an aid to structuring answers for examination questions. For example in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher skilfully encouraged students to construct spider graphs to structure their thoughts in planning an essay on the application of psychodynamic and social learning theory to personality development. Although students use communication skills and the application of number and information and communication technology in their coursework effectively, the teaching of these key skills is not planned in to the scheme of work and they are therefore not monitored systematically. Most of the work set for students to complete outside lessons takes the form of reading and essay writing. The marking of essays is generally good and includes written comments on what students need to do to improve. Testing is not frequent and subject specific targets for individual students are not in place.
271. Students learn well, are attentive in class and respond well to the teacher. They work independently both in and out of lessons and spend adequate time on private study for the subject. Students enjoy the subject and support and help each other effectively when working in groups. After the initial settling-in period at the beginning of the course, students tend to complete the course. Psychology has increased in popularity over recent years and the current Year 12 students now have to be accommodated in two groups.
272. The good teaching and learning result from the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved to improve standards and a culture of staff development has been established to support this. A good range of helpful learning materials

has been built up and the curriculum has been enhanced by visits to psychology conferences and appropriate theatre productions.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

In English the focus was on the GCE Advanced level English Literature and the combined Language and Literature courses. In modern foreign languages the focus was on German. Lessons were sampled in French where teaching was good. Students achieve well in French in comparison with their GCSE results and achieve average standards

English

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject.
- Standards are improving.
- The valuable support and guidance offered to students on English courses.

Areas for improvement

- The performance of students in the A level examinations.
- The information and guidance about the choice of English courses that is offered to students in Year 11.

273. Standards achieved in GCE A level English Literature and English Language and Literature are below the national average. Standards are slightly better in literature than in the combined course and girls achieve higher grades than boys. However, achievement is broadly consistent with students' qualifications on entry. Recruitment for these courses is low in comparison to other A level subjects but has improved in the past year. Attendance and retention rates are good.
274. The standards observed in lessons and sampling of written work during the inspection revealed work of a higher standard than reflected in the most recent A level results. For example, in a Year 13 literature class students showed considerable skill and knowledge in examining the contrast between coarse language and religious elements in "The Miller's Tale". They were confident in their analysis of the use and effect of juxtaposition. In a Year 13 language/literature lesson students showed considerable textual knowledge when evaluating a series of quotes from critics about the character of the Duke in "Measure for Measure" and then ranking them in order of importance. There is a mismatch between the performance of students in lessons and in examinations. More specific training in revision and examination techniques might narrow the gap. The department has chosen syllabus options where 100 per cent of the assessment is by end of course examination; they could consider options that include assessment of coursework, which students are familiar with from GCSE courses. Some students felt that they would have benefited from more detailed information and advice about the English courses while they were in Year 11.
275. In both courses, students of all abilities participate fully in lessons and demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm. Male students are in a minority and in some classes they are reluctant to volunteer opinions but do so when invited. Students are tolerant and supportive of one another and have positive attitudes.
276. The quality of teaching in both years and on both courses is good. It was at least good in all lessons seen and it was very good or excellent in more than four out of ten lessons. Teachers have very good knowledge of language and literature and convey their enthusiasm to students. They have high expectations but are aware of students' needs and take these into account when planning lessons. Lessons are well paced and contain a variety of activities and approaches. In a Year 12 language/literature class the teacher provided enlarged photocopies of the first four pages of "Beloved" and asked students to annotate and highlight selected elements with coloured pens. This provided an effective visual illustration of the stylistic features of the text. Good use is made of a

range of questioning techniques. Occasionally, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently in lessons. Teacher/student relationships are very good.

277. The assessment and marking of written work are thorough and most students are clear about their level of attainment and their targets for improvement. Teachers use constructive comments in lessons to encourage improvement and homework activities are well targeted. Students are appreciative of the support that they receive from English teachers, both in and outside lessons and feel that this is a particular strength.
278. There are good opportunities for students beyond the taught curriculum. There are film and theatre visits and many are involved in school drama productions. Many support Year 7 and 8 pupils in a paired reading scheme.
279. Teachers are well qualified to teach the A level courses. Accommodation is generally good and good use is made of rooms belonging to other subjects, which have to be used because of timetabling restrictions. Good use is made of the limited library facilities. There is a range of books to support the courses and students have access to the Internet.
280. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Teachers work well as a team and are very supportive of one another. There are effective systems in place and, in a period of transition, the acting head of department has a clear vision of the issues that need to be tackled. Important changes have already been made; a previous decision to run a two year course and not enter pupils for AS examinations at the end of Year 12 has been reversed in the light of this year's experience. There is a willingness to try different approaches in order to make the best provision for students in the school. The current informal monitoring of lessons needs to be made more systematic to ensure that strengths and weaknesses in provision are identified quickly.

German

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

Strengths

- Teachers' language skills are very good.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their students.
- The work of the German assistant is a great asset to sixth form students.
- The learning environment is very good.
- Work experience is a valuable tool in developing student language skills. Moral issues are well covered during the course.

Areas for improvement

- Inaccuracies in both speaking and writing, particularly relating to pronunciation and to verb and case endings.

281. Standards in German at GCE Advanced level over the last two years have matched national averages and show a trend of improvement. However, numbers have been generally low, ranging from three in 2000, to 11 in 1999. All three candidates in 2000 obtained an A or B grade, with two out of five obtaining an A or B grade in 2001. Most students are girls. The one boy entered in 1999 obtained an A grade. At AS level in 2001 five out of 12 candidates obtained A or B grades. This represents satisfactory achievement in comparison with students' GCSE results. Some of the more able students chose to concentrate on other subjects and not to continue with German in Year 13.
282. Evidence from lessons observed shows a continuation of the recent improvement in standards. In Year 13 students are able to use their German to express their opinions clearly. This was especially evident in a lesson taken by the German assistant where individuals were asked to express their own views on abortion. In Year 12 students were able to talk about the impact of tourism on the environment. However, in both years inaccuracies of grammar and pronunciation were evident, with verb endings incorrect and sounds such as 'ch' and 'z' wrongly produced. Listening standards are higher, with students able to understand most of what the teacher and other students say. Reading

skills were especially tested in all four lessons. The students were able to understand most of what they were reading, with help from the teacher and/or dictionaries. Written work varied widely in standard from poor to good. In Year 12 the lower attaining student produced poor quality work, whilst the more able students produced some fluent German, but with a number of inaccuracies. In Year 13 the more able students wrote extensively, but also made a considerable number of errors in basic grammar, eg case and verb endings. The less able student wrote too little and was inaccurate.

283. Students' attitudes to German are positive. They stay on-task throughout. Year 13 students indicated that problems of adapting to an A level course had now been ironed out and that they were enjoying the work that they were doing.
284. The teaching is satisfactory. Two of the lessons observed were taught by a member of staff, a German national, and two by the German assistant. The latter used appropriate material culled from the Internet, in both cases on the theme of abortion. She successfully piloted one girl through a legal text which was very demanding, then encouraged all four students to give their opinions on the abortion issue. In the other two lessons, planning was good, but pace was occasionally slow. There was at times more teacher-talk than student participation. This was to some extent caused by the nature of the material which involved new vocabulary and by subject matter (the effect of tourism on the environment) which required a lot of thought. The lesson, however, provided a good basis for future discussion orally and in writing.
285. There was no use made of information and communication technology during any lesson. In students' folders, however, there were examples of material in English downloaded from the Internet on subjects such as the Berlin Wall. According to the teacher, students use inter-active language software to develop their skills. There are also further individual study booklets soon to be available, which will help students to develop their self-study skills. Written work is well marked, with clear comments. Grading follows the school system which was used pre-16. Targets are given to students both verbally and in writing.
286. Two teachers and the assistant are responsible for the A and AS level courses. They liaise satisfactorily on a day-to-day basis, with overall management from the head of department. Departmental documentation is satisfactory. The course offers considerable opportunities to consider moral questions (e.g. abortion), but there is little sign of any spiritual input into the course.
287. A major asset is the suite of modern language rooms which are bright and attractive. The display material is extremely well produced and gives an excellent background to the work of language learning. A further asset is the annual work experience visit to Munster towards the end of Year 12, which gives a very good opportunity for students to practise and develop their language skills and to appreciate German life and culture. The lack of boys taking German is an issue that the department is very aware of, but despite a great deal of encouragement on the part of teachers, they have not been successful in persuading boys to take up the language. Standards in German at post-16 have continued at a similar level to those at the time of the 1996 inspection.