

# INSPECTION REPORT

## ROSSETT SCHOOL

Harrogate

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121696

Headteacher: Mr J. F. Whittle

Reporting inspector: Mr D. F. H. Morton  
13154

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 189479

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R. Pullan
Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 1996

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23926	D. Howorth	Sixth form co-ordinator	Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2928	W. Baxendale	Team inspector	Community Education	
12825	N. Carr	Team inspector	History (Key Stages 3 and 4) Psychology (sixth form) Vocational education Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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14521	J. Dunning	Team inspector	Sociology	
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31981	E. Forster	Team inspector	Art and design	
21971	J. Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form) Physics (sixth form)	
2941	A. Henderson	Team inspector	Physical education	
13620	G. Leech	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
27665	A. Lees	Team inspector	Music	
19214	G. Price	Team inspector	English	
17404	J. Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 and 4) French (sixth form)	
10564	J. Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography History (sixth form)	
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8341	W. Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Rossett School is an 11-19 mixed comprehensive community school, larger than most secondary schools, with 1257 pupils on roll, of whom 189 are sixth-form students. The school serves a wide area; a significant number of pupils travel from north Leeds. Its population is stable, only eight per cent of pupils joining or leaving the school except at the usual times. The school's pupils come from a wide mix of social backgrounds; the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language is low and none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school currently is average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements, is broadly in line with the national average. About four-fifths of pupils continue in education after the age of 16 and over two-thirds of students who leave at the end of the second year of the sixth form move on to higher education; almost all of the remainder move into employment. A key feature is the provision for the community that enhances the curriculum of the school. The school has achieved Investor in People status, has been granted the Sportsmark Gold Award, is a Young Enterprise Centre and has achieved the Technology Partnership Profile of the North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership.

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

This is a very good school with a number of outstanding characteristics. Teaching is good overall, much of it being very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching and learning are significantly enhanced through the support of very effective administrative staff, technicians and support assistants. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent; the overall management of the school is very effective. Standards are above average and improving steadily. The school gives very good value for money.

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

- The leadership of the school has purpose and vision and is key to its many successes.
- Pupils achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Standards are mostly above average. The school helps pupils to improve on their previous best.
- Overall, teaching is good; teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- The school's values are reflected in its practice of caring for its pupils, developing very good relationships and including all pupils in all aspects of the life of the school.
- The curriculum offers opportunities to all pupils. It maintains a full range of National Curriculum subjects and includes vocational and outstanding work-related courses. The partnership with the wider community gives the curriculum unique qualities. A rich range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning.
- There is a very good sixth form.

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

- Available data to assess pupils' performance is insufficiently used in some departments for planning and to identify how pupils could achieve even more effectively. National criteria are not applied to pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 and reports to parents do not make clear how well children are doing in relation to national standards.
- Standards and pupils' achievement are not high enough in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 is good. In the sixth form it is very good. Standards have steadily improved overall and the quality of teaching and learning is significantly better. Concerns raised at the previous inspection have been successfully tackled, although the school still fails to provide a daily act of collective worship. Information and communication technology (ICT) is still not a part of teaching and learning in some subjects.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	E
A-levels/AS-levels	A	B	N/A	

**Key**

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

In 2001, results in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were above average. Over recent years overall results in these subjects have been above, and sometimes well above average, although the trend of improvement over the past five years has been below that found nationally. However, there was further improvement in 2001 tests, the school's results in English, mathematics and science being well above the national average in comparison with all schools, and average compared with similar schools. These results, when compared with pupils' performance when they were 11 indicate that the school is helping pupils improve on their previous best.

In 2000 GCSE and GNVQ results were broadly average compared with all schools. Results for 2001 dipped slightly but remain about average overall. A significant proportion of pupils follow an effective work-related programme; standards achieved on this programme do not count when reckoning average points score to compare the school's performance with other schools. This accounts in part for the school's weak comparison with similar schools and its no better than average comparison with all schools. There is evidence that pupils achieved better results overall at the age of 16 than they did two years previously at the age of 14. That is, the school is helping pupils to improve on their previous best. A good proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs achieved grades in the 2001 GCSE examination. Overall results in English, mathematics and science were above the national average in 2000; however, in 2001 those in mathematics and science dipped and are broadly in line with national averages. When comparing subjects within school in 2000, the best examination results were in biology, business studies, geography, history, home economics, mathematics and physical education.

Girls performed better than boys overall and performed especially well in business studies, design and technology, history, home economics and mathematics. The best results for boys were in business studies, double-award science, geography, history, mathematics and physical education. Boys' results in modern foreign languages were their weakest; for girls, the least successful subject was art and design, closely followed by German. A similar picture was apparent in 2001, although results in business studies, double-award science and mathematics dipped compared with 2000, and those in religious education improved. The trend of improvement over the previous five years has been broadly in line with that found nationally. The school's results in 2001 have met its targets; these were appropriately challenging.

In 2000, results overall at A-level were above average. Results in 2001 were well above average. The best results in 2001 were in art and design, biology, health and social care, general studies, music and psychology. Results in the new AS examinations were above average. The best results were in art and design, biology, health and social care, general studies, music, psychology and physical education. The weakest results were in chemistry, German, media studies and physics. In the new AS examination in 2001, 96 per cent of students gained a pass grade.

Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 produce work that is above average. This represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9 in relation to pupils' previous attainment; this is sustained through Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are above average and sufficiently well developed to provide full access to learning in all subjects. Standards in the use of ICT in some subjects are not high enough; provision does not meet statutory requirements. Standards in modern languages are below average.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' attitudes are helped by the presence of adults in the community education classes. Most pupils show enthusiasm and interest in all aspect of school life. They approach work seriously and most are anxious to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is almost always very good, although pupils sometimes become restless if a lesson does not fully engage their interest.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst pupils and staff are very good; pupils grow in responsibility and maturity at a fast rate.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, but not as good as it could be. This is because, despite the efforts of the school, days are lost as some parents take holidays during school time.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very 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 and learning are consistently good. A feature of much of the learning is the sense of curiosity pupils bring to lessons. Most show a willingness to stick to tasks they find demanding. Good discussion is a quality seen in many lessons, including pupils making presentations to their classmates as a result of some personal research.

Teaching in English, mathematics and science is consistently good. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good in most subjects. Pupils with special education needs are well taught and most teachers plan their work to meet the differing learning needs of pupils, although targets in individual education plans are unevenly applied across subjects. However, due emphasis is given to pupils' learning; the quality of learning throughout the school is consistently good. By the end of lessons pupils have increased knowledge and understanding and developed the range of skills required for success in subjects. Teaching is rarely less than satisfactory and is usually due to a lack of variety in approaches to teaching and learning.

Frequently, teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. As a result learning is very effective and reflected in the very good attitudes pupils bring to their work. Teaching in the sixth form is very good overall. Teaching throughout the school is confident and well-informed, and the expectations of teachers are high. The management of pupils is rarely less than very good and teachers' use of a wide variety of approaches to learning and teaching are evident. There is a very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

## **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range and variety of learning opportunities are very good. The school's provision for work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 is outstanding. The provision for community education increases the opportunities for pupils. A feature of the curriculum is its inclusivity in providing appropriate learning opportunities for all pupils. ICT is not used to support learning in some subjects; this is a statutory requirement. Provision of non-examination religious education in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is very good provision. Pupils with special needs follow the same curriculum as all other pupils. There are small withdrawal groups in Years 7 to 9 for pupils whose literacy skills are weak.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional	The small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language have a good command of English that allows them full access to all

language	aspects of the curriculum. Their learning is monitored.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision for pupils' personal development is very good. There has been a significant improvement in the school's arrangements to encourage pupils' spiritual development since the previous inspection. It is now very good, in keeping with the provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare are very good. The procedures for monitoring and supporting attendance are satisfactory and for behaviour and personal development are very good. The school's procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' achievement are good. However, the use of assessment data is not sufficiently developed in all subject areas, especially in Years 7 to 9.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Parents believe Rossett to be a very good school that provides a caring, challenging environment in which their children are encouraged to work hard. As a result parents are pleased with the progress their children make.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He has a strong, imaginative and innovative vision that guides the school's daily practice and points the way for future development. He is well supported by his deputies and assistant headteacher. A significant feature is the role of the headteacher and senior management in influencing the nature of the school's community provision so that it enhances the overall school curriculum.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	An effective governing body ensures that development and change are thoroughly evaluated before being put into effect. The school breaches statutory requirements to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management board and the governing body very successfully promote in the school an ethos of continuing improvement and self-evaluation. A central feature when the school sets its priorities is the raising of standards in all aspects of the school's life.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is rigorous and the principles of obtaining best value are applied when the school is purchasing goods and services. New technology is well used in the management of the school and specific grants are effective in meeting intended purposes. Provision for staffing is good and matches the curricular needs of the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children are required to work hard and therefore make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some feel the amount of homework set is insufficient, others that there is too much.</li> <li>• Some feel the school does not keep them adequately informed of their children's progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They also agree that, whilst end-of-year reports to parents are good, other information is not as helpful as it might be. Inspectors found that the amount of homework set was about right, although there were examples of it not being set consistently.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is gradually expanding and there are 189 students on roll. There is a wide range of traditional academic and new vocational courses. The sixth form has open access although students who enroll on the advanced courses are generally expected to have achieved at least a grade C at GCSE in the subjects they select. Standards at the start of Year 12 are average overall but about a third of students begin with below average GCSE attainment. Just over a half of pupils from Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form and very few join from other schools.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is very good. It is cost-effective. Standards have improved considerably over recent years and the results in 2001 were well above average. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and consequently the students achieve well above what might be expected in relation to their average levels of GCSE attainment. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

**Strengths**

- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching and learning, particularly the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects and their high expectations of the students, is very good.
- Well above average standards are achieved in biology, design and technology and psychology and standards are above average in art and design, English literature, general studies, health and social care, music, sociology and physical education.
- The provision of vocational education is very good and these courses are successful.
- Outstanding support and guidance underpin the personal and academic development of students. Very good relationships between students and staff and students ensure very effective learning.
- The breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum are excellent. The curriculum includes the teaching of key skills and an outstanding enrichment programme.

**What could be improved**

- The proportion of the higher A and B grade passes in some subjects is not high enough. The school's results do not currently match the national average for these higher grades.
- Results in chemistry, German, media studies and physics were below the national average in 2001.
- There is inconsistency of standards across subjects.

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

**THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS**

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



Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Results have improved and were average last year. They represent satisfactory achievement. Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above average. Students achieve very well because they work hard and respond enthusiastically to the very effective teaching they receive.
Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were below average last year. Present standards are above average in practical and investigative work but there are shortcomings in students' written work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Design and technology	<b>Very good.</b> Results are gradually improving and were average last year. Present standards are well above average because teaching and learning are very good.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Examination results are improving in response to good teaching. The subject is popular and students achieve well in relation to their previous GCSE results.
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> Results are improving and were well above average last year. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good and present standards are above average.
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Recent results are well above average. Standards are well above average and rising. Teaching is very good and excellent technological resources support students' learning
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Results are average and reflect good achievement. Teaching and learning are good. There are examples of good course work.
History	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve average results overall. Teaching and learning are good because of effective planning and a variety of teaching methods.
Sociology	<b>Good.</b> Results are improving and were average last year. Teaching and learning are very good and in consequence students achieve very well.
Psychology	<b>Excellent.</b> Results are well above average. Standards are high because teaching is excellent and as a result students' learning is very effective.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Results are consistently above average. Present standards of work are above average because teaching and learning are very good and students work hard.
French	<b>Satisfactory.</b> French is not a popular subject. Achievement is satisfactory because of the positive attitude of students and the satisfactory teaching, although students rarely have the opportunity for independent work.

In 14 other subjects 23 lessons were seen. Teaching was almost consistently good, frequently very good and sometimes excellent. Excellent teaching and learning were seen in health and social care and theatre studies. Teaching in all the business

subjects is often very good. Teaching on the enrichment programme is well planned and consistently good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance for students are excellent. Careers guidance is very good. The use of assessment to monitor progress makes an effective contribution to good standards and achievement
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed effectively. The school's aims and values permeate sixth-form provision. The governing body has an important role in developing the sixth form provision.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The choice of courses, induction and information are valued.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching is very good.</li> <li>• The support and guidance students receive is valued.</li> <li>• Opportunities to take responsibilities in many areas both in and outside school are welcomed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers advice for employment is inconsistent.</li> <li>• Some feel they should be listened to more and treated more as adults.</li> <li>• Information about progress is infrequently given.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities is insufficient.</li> </ul>

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors believe that the provision is better than the perceptions of some students because the inspection occurred early in the school year when many students had very limited experience of the sixth form.

## 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

##### Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Pupils' achievement is good in relation to when they started in school.
- Pupils achieve the best results in biology, chemistry, geography, history, physical education and physics.
- Standards achieved in work-related courses are very good.

##### Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations are not as good as the overall standards seen in day-to-day work in school.
- Standards are variable across subjects.
- Standards, and pupils' achievement, in modern languages are not high enough in Years 7 to 11.
- The use of ICT fall short of statutory requirements, especially in Years 10 and 11.

1. Results in National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were well above average overall when compared with all schools nationally. These results are typical of recent years and there was some steady improvement in 2001. Given that these pupils were of average attainment when they began in school in Year 7, these results represent very good achievement; the school has succeeded in helping these pupils improve on their previous best. The results are average compared with similar schools based on a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals; this indicates scope for further improvement, especially in English where fewer pupils achieve level 5 or above or the higher level 6 or above than do in mathematics and science.

2. Results in GCSE and GNVQ examinations for 16 year olds in 2000 were broadly average compared with all schools. Results for 2001 dipped slightly but also are average compared to the national average; the school achieved the appropriate targets it set itself. The trend of improvement over five years has been broadly in line with that found nationally. Pupils were helped by the school to perform better than might be expected, achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest A\* and A grades is lower than the national average for all schools; Rossett School should now intensify its efforts to identify the ten per cent of highest attainers and develop policies of the same calibre as those devised for pupils with special educational needs in order that more of these higher-attaining pupils achieve the higher grades. For example, the performance of pupils with special educational needs is particularly commendable in that a good proportion of them achieved grades in the GCSE examination. It is significant to the

overall picture, when comparing the school's performance to that of other schools, that almost a quarter of pupils in Year 11 in 2001 were on the register of special educational needs. This commitment of the school to curricular relevance and the inclusivity of all pupils points the way for future development.

3. Overall, results in English, mathematics and science were above average in 2000 GCSE examinations, being above the national average. However, in 2001 results in mathematics and science dipped and were broadly in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys.

4. In comparing the school's overall performance with national averages it is significant to note that the innovative curriculum, commended elsewhere in this report, results in a proportion of pupils not taking GCSE or GNVQ examinations. As a result their successes in this programme are not reflected in the published results nationally or in the table in the summary section of this report. Work-related learning is part of the outstanding vocational education provision available to pupils and is a successful feature of the school. Those who do take GNVQ performed particularly well in 2001, improving on the 2000 results. Of 16 pupils taking the Diploma in Vocational Education, 14 achieved a qualification and all 13 who took the GNVQ units in leisure and tourism and business studies achieved qualifications. Additional accredited vocational courses included food hygiene and an ICT course; if all courses are aggregated, almost 90 per cent of pupils obtained qualifications.

5. Community education classes make good contributions to raising standards through, for example, 9-week Sunday extra languages courses in German and French; there are art and design and sculpture courses that help some Year 11 pupils with their coursework and increased opportunities to improve ICT capabilities as part of basic skills provision.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across the whole curriculum. Those pupils with special educational needs who reached the statutory leaving age in 2001 achieved GCSE grades A\* to G in an average of seven subjects and at an average grade near to E. In addition a number gained certificates for work-related courses. Pupils in the withdrawal groups for literacy in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in reading and spelling when compared with their attainment on entering the school at the age of 11. In individual subjects pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects except art and design and history, where progress is satisfactory, and modern foreign languages, where progress is unsatisfactory.

7. The school has worked hard to improve the performance of boys. Up to 2000 results in GCSE examinations reflected these efforts. However, the gap widened again between boys and girls' performance in the 2001 examinations.

8. Nonetheless, the school has taken well planned initiatives to raise boys' motivation and attainment. Teachers have developed a culture in which it is acceptable for boys to do well: allowing boys to show what they can do; being patient, encouraging and non-confrontational; giving feedback to raise boys' self-esteem; building their confidence before expecting success; allowing them to make choices and take responsibility; being fair in the equal treatment of boys and girls; employing seating arrangements and group tasks where boys and girls mix and share learning together. Boys' success is a key part of the school's commitment to inclusivity.

9. Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils across the age group 11 to 16 produce work that, generally, is above average. This represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9 given their broadly average attainment on entry to the school; this rate of achievement is sustained during Years 10 and 11. Standards of work seen are

above average in English, mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school pupils are responding to consistently good and imaginative teaching. However, standards in modern foreign languages are below average, mainly due to teaching methods being insufficiently varied to meet the differing learning needs of pupils.

10. The school is engaging with the requirements to focus on improving basic skills during Years 7 to 9. Throughout the school, standards of literacy are above average. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the learning support programme. A number of subjects ensure that technical terms and language are properly used and spelt and in a range of subjects, including history and geography pupils engage in extended pieces of writing. Presentation is generally good. The standards of pupils for whom English is an additional language are carefully monitored even though pupils are fluent in English.

11. Standards of numeracy are above average. Good support for development occurs within the mathematics programmes of study and skills are developed especially well in business studies, design and technology, science and geography where pie charts, scatter graphs, data handling and the recording and use of statistics are part of the learning opportunities offered to pupils. In mathematics lessons, it is now not unusual for lessons to begin with some mental exercises, usually in arithmetic.

12. Standards in ICT are average overall, despite failing to meet statutory requirements in a minority of subjects. Where it is used systematically, standards are higher than this, often involving the creation of spreadsheets for recording data in, for example, mathematics, design and technology and business studies. ICT software is used in music for composition. Many subjects encourage pupils to use word-processing in presenting their work. However, in a number of subjects ICT is not embedded into teaching and learning; until it is statutory requirements are not being met.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Strengths**

- Overall results in 2001 were well above average.
- Result in the new AS and key skills examinations were impressive.
- The school's results in the sixth form represent very good achievement in relation to the students' attainment at the beginning of Year 12.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There are inconsistencies in results and standards seen across subjects.

13. Students start the sixth form with standards that are average overall although a third begin with below average GCSE attainment. Given this starting point students achieve well above what might be expected. Results have improved considerably since the previous inspection. In 2001 they were well above average in comparison with all maintained schools and there was no significant gender

difference. At A-level, the best results were in art and design, biology, health and social care, general studies, music, physical education and psychology. The proportion of the higher grades A and B, however, is lower than the national average. The less successful subjects at A-level were chemistry, German, media studies and physics. The results and achievement in the vocational courses are notably high. In 2000 the results were above average and the attainment of male students was higher than that of the female students.

14. In the key skills course students achieve well and most attain level 3. In subjects generally, attention is paid to the key skills of communication, use of number and facility with ICT. As a result, students' access to learning across subjects is enhanced by their developing facility in related key skills. In many subjects, for example English, physical education, theatre studies and music, the secondary skills of working together and problem-solving are well advanced.



15. In 2001 in the new AS examinations at the end of Year 12, 96 per cent of students gained pass grades: a good achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form. In the key skills examinations the results were equally good. A number of statistical measures indicate that achievement is very good particularly for students with lower GCSE attainment. Course completion rates are high. Many students move into higher education, a few take a gap year and half of the small numbers seeking employment are successful.

16. In the lessons observed and in the samples of students' work seen standards are above average overall. They are well above in biology, design and technology, health and social care and psychology and above average in art and design, English literature, general studies, music, sociology and physical education. They are average in all other subjects that were the focus of the inspection of the sixth form.

17. These standards reflect the good progress made by most students during the first half term in their new courses. This good achievement is the result of the very good teaching, which has high expectations of them.

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

##### **Strengths**

- Pupils bring very good attitudes and values to their life in school.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Relationships are very good between pupils and with members of staff.

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

- Rates of attendance are below the average for secondary schools.

18. Inspectors agree with the views that were expressed to them by many pupils. Pupils said that they value the education that they receive; their teachers are extremely helpful and they are pleased to have a very wide range of extra-curricular activities to choose from. They said that it is a friendly school and that they enjoy it. Pupils are very positive about their experiences in school. They are interested in their studies and apply themselves conscientiously, wanting to do well. Their involvement, in the extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities, is high.

19. The standard of pupils' behaviour is very good and it contributes very well to the quality of learning and life in the school. Pupils conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in almost all lessons. Their behaviour only falls below an acceptable standard when, on rare occasions, teaching or learning activities are insufficiently stimulating. Movement about the school is orderly and there are very few instances of disorderliness. Instances of bullying are very rare. The number of exclusions last year was low compared to similar schools.

20. Relationships between pupils are very good. Pupils are tolerant, cooperative and supportive. They work and play very well together, listen to and respect each other's views and often show their appreciation of the efforts of others.

21. Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. By the end of Year 11, they are mature and responsible and most have a good understanding of their intentions for the next stage of their lives. Pupils' sense of moral and social values are very well developed, they become very responsible and sensitive to the needs of others and their competence as independent learners is good.

22. Pupils' attitudes are helped by the presence of adults in community education classes. The care of the fabric is evidence of the very good attitudes and behaviour; it is noteworthy that the community section is adjacent to the Years 10 and 11 recreation area. The school strives with considerable success to achieve a seamless mix for the mutual benefit of pupils and adults that is to be reaped by the community education provision of the school. Community education is seen by management and governors as at the heart of the school's philosophy and it is.

23. Attendance is deemed to be satisfactory overall, although it is just below the average for secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is low. The number of pupils who have a poor record of attendance is low. Pupils want to come to school because they enjoy it. A significant amount of absence is not owing to pupils' poor attitudes towards attendance but because a substantial number of parents arrange family holidays during school time.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Strengths**

- Students' attitudes and values are very good and contribute to their effective learning.
- Students make a valuable contribution to the quality of life throughout the school.
- Students enjoy mature relationships with each other and staff.

24. Parents of sixth-form students are pleased with the values promoted by the school.

25. The large majority of students enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. They want to do well and apply themselves very conscientiously to their work and their conduct in almost all lessons is very good or excellent. They are mature and responsible in their attitude towards their peers, teachers and pupils in the main school. They value and participate very well in the various enrichment experiences that are available to them.

26. Students' personal development is very good. They take responsibility for their own community through their own committee and competently manage the social functions of the sixth form. Each student undertakes community service for one hour per week. This may be out of school, for example helping pupils at a primary school or in school, for example acting as senior friends to a particular form in the main school. These students are part of a 'listeners' group to whom substantial training in counselling skills is given. Sixth formers organise an entire week of fundraising activities for charities and are hosts to visitors when public events are staged by the school. The head boy or head girl represents the school at meetings of the governing board.

27. Students' personal development is enhanced by the many opportunities to participate in projects and initiatives out of school that sometimes include visits overseas for example to support community work in underdeveloped countries. Extra-curricular activities, residential visits for example to London as part of an educational programme and coursework experiences relating to vocational

education, contribute very effectively to students' developing maturity. Students' very good progress in the application of study and key skills and their self-management contribute very well to their competence as independent learners.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall, often very good and sometimes excellent.
- Teachers are well-informed and enthusiastic about their subjects.
- In the best lessons pupils evaluate their own work as part of a lesson's structure.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of variety in methods applied to teaching and learning in a minority of subjects.

28. In Years 7 to 11, in three out of every four lessons the teaching is good or better. In over a quarter of lessons teaching is very good or excellent. Teaching was less than satisfactory in only five out of 226 lessons observed. Teaching in English was very good and in mathematics and science was good. The quality of the teaching is a main reason why the school is successful. Teachers know their subjects well, are enthusiastic about them and present them to pupils in a lively and motivating manner. They establish excellent relationships with pupils. Teachers have created very good learning environments in which pupils develop intellectually, physically, socially and creatively.

29. Teachers have clear objectives for their lessons and the best share these with pupils. Good lessons end with a check on whether these objectives have been achieved and the learning has been effective. In an ICT lesson in Year 7, for example, the task set was to edit bald text in order to present it more effectively. Pupils already knew about enlarging and changing font, may could use the spell-checker or change colours. A checklist of lesson objectives was maintained by the pupils and the teacher; this formed a system of ongoing assessment by pupils and teachers. Pupils were motivated to succeed, proceed at their own pace and check their success at the end of the lesson. Successes were celebrated by the teacher. In the majority of the best lessons there is evidence of pupils learning something new or consolidating that which is already known and understood. Pupils are helped to understand what they must do to improve their work. The marking of written work in the best instances indicates areas for improvement in a helpful way. In some activities, for example art and design, design and technology, drama and music, pupils are asked to assess the effectiveness of their own work and that of their classmates.

30. A further feature of the very good and excellent teaching is the high expectations that this teaching has of pupils. Teachers use questions skilfully to extend thinking and check understanding. They expect answers to be thorough and comprehensive. This is clear in the best lessons. In a lesson about autobiographical writing in English with higher-attaining pupils in Year 9, the learning pace was very good from the outset. Teaching was brisk and the teacher had clear and detailed plans and pupils responded well to the teacher's quick-fire questioning. Pupils were required to highlight key writing skills during and finally as a critique of their learning at the end of the lesson. Learning in this lesson was excellent and pupils made very

good progress. In an electronics lesson about computer-aided design, the teacher began by telling pupils 'I am starting you off with one challenge' and all pupils had clear knowledge of what was expected of them in the lesson and responded positively to these demands. Pupils of different levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, were fully included in appropriate task-setting by the teacher. Learning was effective and pupils showed their learnt skills in responding to the desk-top package introduced by the teacher. The teacher showed the pupils how thrilled he was at the success enjoyed by the pupils as they tackled a sophisticated challenge. He expected the best and pupils were motivated to give of their best.

31. At best, teaching is inspirational and pupils enjoy their learning. In music in Year 8, pupils were writing their own compositions. The lesson began by pupils evaluating similar work by another class, pointing out strengths and especially successful elements. This motivated them to be successful themselves, judging their own work and that of others against set criteria. Their own compositions were well thought through, had shape and musical form and their work was skilfully extended and improved by the teacher's intervention during group work, probing and developing their work through demanding questions that stimulated ideas in pupils. This excellent teaching was lively, enthusiastic, proceeded at a good pace and inspired pupils to do their best and take pride in their own achievement. Similar principles were seen in an excellent drama lesson with Year 10 in which pupils were very keen to experiment with stylisation arising from initial monologues created by an individual within each group, for example about racism towards Jews or the stress of motherhood. Each group built a stylised drama arising from the monologue that expressed the attitudes of related characters. The quality of learning was high owing to skilful and inspirational direction and idea-creation by an imaginative and well-informed teacher.

32. In less successful teaching, especially that which is unsatisfactory, teachers sometimes lead too strongly so that pupils do not contribute as much as they might to their learning and their methods do not vary to meet the learning needs of different pupils or the different demands of aspects of the course. Whilst satisfactory teaching ensures some effective learning, it rarely engages pupils to the extent that their lasting interest for the subject is aroused.

33. The teaching of literacy and of numeracy is good. It is the policy of the school that departments devise strategies to encourage the development of these basic skills, although senior management and heads of department do not always monitor the effective implementation of these principles. However in general, teaching has ensured that standards of literacy and numeracy are above average and provide pupils with good access to learning in all subjects.

34. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching is very good in withdrawal groups for literacy because of the very good relationships established by the teacher along with well-structured lessons and a very strong focus on the lesson objectives. Numeracy for pupils with special needs is well taught in mainstream mathematics lessons. In these lessons teachers have good management skills, establish good relationships with pupils and make good use of resources. Teachers in all subjects are aware of the targets on pupils' individual education plans and nearly all take account of them in their planning and teaching. Where teaching assistants are available they provide very effective support. Where the school has begun to provide extension programmes for higher-attaining pupils the achievement of these pupils is enhanced. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve well as a result of teachers from time to time monitoring the effectiveness of learning.

## Sixth form

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Outstanding lessons were seen in design and technology, English literature, health and social care, sociology, psychology and theatre studies.
- The teaching of key skills in the specific programmed course and within most subjects is effective.
- Teaching in vocational courses is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient breadth of learning and teaching approaches in some subjects, notably in modern languages.

35. In the sixth form, teaching is good or better in more than four lessons out of every five. In almost two lessons out of every five it is very good or excellent; teaching in almost one in ten lessons is excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the sixth form.

36. A key reason for the examination results being above average is the consistently good and often exceptional teaching. This includes the regular attention given to the key skills of communication, the application of number and the use of ICT to learning situations. The most successful teachers are hardworking, committed, knowledgeable, imaginative and enthusiastic. Sixth-form students cited these qualities as a main strength of the Rossett Sixth Form. There is an intensity of endeavour in the very good and excellent teaching; teachers assume that students will do well and this is realised in their efforts and attainment. The school has high expectations of students and teachers; both respond to the challenge.

37. For example, in a demanding sociology lesson, students had to interpret their own earlier research about a theory of 'the presentation of self in everyday life'. Discussion was led very skilfully by the teacher, drawing upon students' research. The students were mature in their response to and exploration of the concepts and ideas of Erving Goffman. There was an expectation by the teacher that students' own work would have prepared them for some demanding thought; students had been motivated to be ready for this and brought a secure base of knowledge and understanding to the lesson.

38. In an English literature lesson about Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' - exciting but difficult and demanding material - the teacher's excellent knowledge of the work inspired pupils to discuss, at a complex level, the notion of 'innocence' and how innocence is impossible without 'experience'. The teacher's skilful questioning and exposition revealed the students' depth of interest in the poetry and philosophy behind Blake's work. For example, they held lively discussions in groups about the symbols used by the poet to heighten meaning and feeling. Students were encouraged to think and respond for themselves and they made very good progress in the lesson in extending their understanding of Blake's imagery and poetic style.



39. In psychology with Year 12, students new to this subject were introduced to psychological theory, research and application, and social cognition and theories of attribution. The teacher had planned this lesson thoroughly and provided good, detailed back-up material. The standard of emerging work was above average, notable for the establishment of a sound knowledge base as pupils worked independently and together in response to inspired teaching, using demonstrations of psychological method.

40. This thorough planning is typical of the best sixth-form teaching. Planning is carefully linked to the course specifications and for the differing learning needs of students. When new work is introduced, it is done with care so that when students come to work independently, purposes are clear. Teachers take time at the start of lessons to identify objectives and at the ends of lessons check with students whether these have been achieved.

41. The use of research and findings arising from it are aspects of many subjects. It is a feature of teaching and learning that staff and students celebrate together the successful acquisition of new knowledge and understanding. In most subjects a joy in learning develops as the course develops. The inspection occurred early in the school year yet Year 12 students were often excited and stimulated by new learning and a more mature approach to the teaching and learning processes. Students generally show a willingness to respond to challenges and do their best. For example, in a business studies lesson with Year 12, students undertook the challenge of work-related market research requiring them to construct a questionnaire in order to find out how marketing really works and how firms target potential markets. This very good lesson was well managed by the teacher as a result of careful planning and full account taken of examination requirements. As in most sixth-form teaching, it was characterised by enthusiasm and very good knowledge of the subject.

42. In an advanced Leisure and Recreation course, Year 13 students presented a paper on sporting outlets in Harrogate. They showed a good understanding of the importance of quality and how this might differ according to the type or size of shop. In making their presentations it was clear the impact that work in key skills had had, for their presentation of information showed their speaking skills, the outcome of research and their capability in analysing information. Attention is generally given in lessons to key skills, many pupils taking the tests and achieving level 3; teaching has a clear focus on communication and use and the impact of this established work is clear and helps students to respond to the demands of traditional academic and vocational courses.

43. In a mathematics' lesson about probability in statistics with Year 12, learning was good as a result of very good teaching. The teacher used the assessment of homework by reviewing problems encountered, such as pie-charts to identify probabilities not being well or fully presented. Thus, assessment had been used effectively in the planning of the lesson. The work that followed took account of the differing attainment levels of students within the class. Students were encouraged to relate theory to practical application in their use of statistics. The teaching had a

focus of developing students' thinking skills, rather than regurgitating theory from text-books.

44. A lesson with five Year 12 students was conducted effectively in French. As a result students' listening and speaking skills were enhanced. The teacher's accent and fluency were good. Effective questioning extended students' speaking and vocabulary. Yet, whilst effective in enhancing speaking and listening, a teacher-led approach dominated. Students were infrequently required to construct their own sentences, since conversation was mainly in response to the teacher's lead. Opportunities were missed to enable students to present ideas and facts to the group independently of the teacher, using the well-resourced materials that had been provided and were well matched to students' learning needs. Students' ability to have done this were shown by their talking fluently and in detail in the present tense about what they had read, but, again, in response to questions posed by the teacher rather than through them being invited to take responsibility for making short presentations themselves.

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

#### **Strengths**

- The curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant, innovative and inclusive.
- Provision for work-related learning is outstanding.
- Personal, social and health education, including careers, are very good.
- Provision for community education has a significant impact on the school's commitment to open doors of opportunity for all pupils.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils make good progress.
- The school's efforts to develop pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally are very good and successful. This success is seen and felt in the overall ambiance of the school.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- ICT is not used to support learning in some subjects: this is a statutory requirement.
- Provision for drama is inadequate in Years 7 to 9.
- Provision for non-examination religious education is inadequate in Years 10 and 11.

45. The range and variety of learning opportunities are very good. All pupils have access to the subjects of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 although the requirement that there is adequate planned provision for drama in Years 7 to 9 is not met. In Year 7 all pupils have one lesson of ICT and are able to do a short GCSE course in ICT in Year 10. However, at present access to ICT through the curriculum in Years 8, 9 and 11 is variable and does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils are offered the opportunity to study a second modern language from Year 8. Time allocated to teaching is in line with national

norms. The provision for art and design and music which was an issue in the previous inspection has been resolved.

46. In Years 10 and 11 pupils choose from an appropriate range of courses leading to GCSE examinations. Many pupils take up to 10 subjects to GCSE. The school also makes excellent arrangements for pupils for whom this would be inappropriate in its innovative work-related learning course carefully tailored to meet their needs and interests. The management of this course is outstanding. Pupils following the work-related course take up to 5 subjects to GCSE including English, mathematics and science and in addition they follow taster courses in a variety of subjects at the local college, take part in work experience placements on a regular basis, complete accredited courses in ICT and participate in a range of activities in the community. The excellent management and continuous monitoring and development of this course make a valuable contribution to pupils' development.

47. All pupils have access to three science subjects and there is very good provision in design and technology where courses are well designed to lead on to advanced courses in the sixth form. The provision for physical education is excellent in Years 10 and 11 and additional time is used to provide extensive outdoor education opportunities.

48. The provision for activities which enhance the curriculum is excellent. The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities both at lunchtime and after school and these are valued by the pupils. For example the school runs Easter and summer courses which enhance the taught curriculum and help pupils prepare for examinations. There is an excellent range of sporting and musical activities well supported by pupils. A high proportion of pupils are encouraged to learn to play a musical instrument and there are regular musical productions such as 'Grease' and 'Bugsy Malone'. Pupils take part in music clubs such as saxophone and the jazz band at lunchtime and after school as well as performing in the Harrogate Festival and for civic events. Pupils attend the Junior Proms. A young engineers club meets regularly and is enthusiastically and well attended by pupils from all years. Older pupils enter the BBC Techno Games Competition. Sports activities are very well supported by pupils from all years and include soccer, tennis, badminton, squash, climbing and hockey. Pupils are offered help in ICT and mathematics after school and at lunchtimes. These sessions help pupils improve their standards. Other clubs and societies cater for a wide variety of interests and take-up for most of them is high, for example insect club, drama and dance clubs, choir, aerobics and an art and design club. The school also offers the opportunity for pupils to take part in a variety of residential visits including field trips in geography and history, exchanges to France, Germany and Japan and a significant number of pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

49. The quality of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. The programme is very well developed and organised and includes some excellent features. In the lower school, it is incorporated into one tutorial period each week and one separate PSHE lesson. The tutorial takes various forms such as an assembly, one-to-one progress reviews or checking of planners and in some lessons further actual PSHE study. This provides form tutors with the opportunity for

building and maintaining relationships with individual pupils and influencing their progress on a regular basis. At the start of this year, a new timetable reduced the allocation of time for PSHE to one hour per week in Year 10 and next year in Years 10 and 11, in order to introduce an ICT course. It is too early to judge how this will affect the programme. The programmes of study that are incorporated into the weekly PSHE lesson are very well developed in Years 10 and 11, particularly regarding drugs awareness, sex education and citizenship. PSHE is taught by a specialist team of teachers and augmented from time to time by external speakers such as an expert in stress management and relaxation. The quality of teaching is good overall and characterised by very good knowledge of subject matter and enthusiastic commitment. The teaching methods used are usually appropriate although there is some overuse of worksheets and group work is not always as effective as it could be. The innovative assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress and competence in all the units of study are based on the system used for national vocational qualifications and are impressive. Even further enhancement to this system is currently under consideration.

50. Careers education and guidance are incorporated in the programme for PSHE and commences in Year 9. The programme very effectively covers consideration of subject choices, sixth-form options and self-evaluation regarding suitability and aspirations. All pupils have a well-planned opportunity of a testing interview with a careers service officer and undergo two weeks effective work experience with a local employer. At present pupils do not have the opportunity of a formal mock interview with an employer. A very good careers library that includes literature and interview facilities is accessible throughout the day. Software applications to assist pupils are available on the school's computer network.

51. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school has a very firm commitment to include all pupils in the full life of the school. As part of this philosophy pupils with special needs follow effectively the same curriculum as all other pupils. They receive good learning opportunities through the full National Curriculum except for six pupils in Years 8 and 9 who are disapplied from modern foreign languages. There are small withdrawal groups in Years 7 to 9 for pupils whose literacy skills are weak and these lessons are time-tabled for when the pupils would otherwise be doing English.

52. The school has a clear belief that regardless of ability and background each person is of equal importance. It puts its theory into practice very effectively and is very successful in providing an education with equal access to appropriate courses for all pupils. Different groups of pupils are included in all activities. The school exudes an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and equality for everyone, including parents and visitors to the school.

53. The provision for community education on the site is extensive and attracts a very high level of take up, mainly from adults but many pupils and sixth-form students take advantage of the opportunities that are plentiful. In some subjects there are curricular links established in a coherent and enhancing series of planned activities. This extension of learning opportunities through the community education programme is very good. Provision reinforces excellently the school's priority of

educational inclusion through, for example, 18 individual projects targeting numerous social and educational disadvantages. The programme's recent evolution towards work in the community has broadened a base that still retains very good adult education opportunities servicing, in the school and outlying villages, the language, computing, fine art and many other specific interests of a well-established adult clientele. Annually organised initiatives involve pupils in, for instance, 'beach-watch' geography-related courses and residential opportunities with disabled adolescents. Opportunities for pupils on GNVQ courses to benefit from study and participation in relevant community-based activities are comparatively underdeveloped, as is the participation of older pupils in the flourishing language courses for the community.

54. Substantial recreational and sporting pastimes are well supported by a jointly managed sports centre that gives the pupils use of facilities that are well above average.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Strengths**

- The curricular provision is very good.
- There is a good balance between traditional academic courses and a range of vocational opportunities that are studied to different levels, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE).
- New requirements under Curriculum 2000 have been successfully implemented.
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is enjoyed by a good proportion of students.
- Community education provision raises barriers and gives improved access to educational chances.

55. The curricular provision and the quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. The school has successfully implemented the recent changes of Curriculum 2000 to meet the academic and personal needs of all students regardless of their different backgrounds. About one half of the Year 11 pupils and a small number from other schools decide to continue their education beyond the age of 16 at Rossett School.

56. The curriculum offers a very wide range of academic and vocational courses. The school consults students on courses they would like to see provided. As a result theatre studies and ICT are recent additions. Breadth, balance and relevance are excellent as is the programme of enrichment and the extra-curricular provision. It has expanded and is more comprehensive than at the time of the previous inspection. It is so full that it engages many students for most of their time, leaving short but appropriate amounts of time for independent work.

57. A flexible and imaginative curriculum structure provides students with a very wide choice of 22 subjects. These include the traditional academic and new vocational courses; pathways to higher education, training and employment are therefore well provided. The General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ)

intermediate and the new Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses provide work placements and some work-related learning. AVCE subjects can be taken as part, single or double awards together with other subjects. Time allocations match syllabus requirements and expected class sizes are frequently larger in Year 12 on the AS courses than in Year 13 on the A2 courses. Few have less than five students and are sufficiently large for meaningful debate and the effective sharing of ideas. Key skills courses have been carefully planned. Communication is taught in all subjects, as are ICT and the application of number. The latter two are further developed in separate lessons that are compulsory for all students.

58. All students take general studies although not all choose to be entered for the examination. Those who do are very successful; many gain higher grades and almost all pass. The course is very well planned and synchronised with the tutorial programme and personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Year 12. These timetabled compulsory lessons cover a variety of topics and themes and include religious education. They involve visiting speakers and make a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of students. For example, in a very good lesson students used extracts from literature to explore the different meanings of love. In a good lesson a former student described her gap year in Peru with graphic references to the social and economic conditions. The annual "Rag Week" for charity and social events organised by the students strengthens their personal development. The facilities of the sixth form are not conducive to a daily act of collective worship. Careers education and guidance are provided. The sequence and content are very good and links with local business and higher education are strong.

59. The extra-curricular provision is rich and ranges from all students making a regular contribution to the school or wider community. Some are trained "listeners" and are attached to Year 7 tutor groups. The effectiveness of this role is much appreciated by parents. Some support pupils with special educational needs in their lessons whilst others help these pupils with their reading. In local community work students have placements in, for example homes for the elderly and primary schools. There are residential trips at home and abroad and regular visits to theatres and galleries. Two recent examples are worthy of particular note. At a "Business Breakfast" for the Institute of Directors in Harrogate students made a superb presentation on education in the E-World. Having won through the British Airways Fulcrum Challenge two students are currently working in Botswana and this follows a similar success last year when two students worked in an orphanage in Mongolia. The Community Sports Leader Award is not as successful as previously due to timetable clashes. Although there is no formal recreation on the timetable students have the use of the Sports Centre at lunchtimes and immediately after school.

60. Departments have developed new schemes of work to effectively meet the requirements of the new specifications. These enable students to build on their GCSE work and quickly start to make progress in the sixth form. Curricular planning is very good or excellent in most subjects and it contributes significantly to the

quality of teaching and students' learning. It is weakest, though satisfactory, in French and physics.

## **Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and sixth-form students**

61. Provision for spiritual development is very good. It has improved since the previous inspection and is now a strength of the school. In a whole-school assembly during the inspection week, pupils and students had the opportunity to reflect on current world events. The school was aware of the concern that these were causing some older pupils and sixth formers. Prayer enhanced their reflection. The central truths of other faiths in relation to the notion of 'treating others as you would wish to be treated yourself' was importantly realised in a ritual reading from the teaching of a number of world faiths. Although not all subjects acknowledge a spiritual dimension to their work, the provision is good overall. In religious education, for example, pupils are given insights into the nature of God and of 'being', and they reflect on the uses of prayer and belief. In English, pupils express empathy with others in their poetry writing. In music, work in composition by pupils is enjoyed and a sense of excitement generated as they evaluate their own and others' work. In drama, identification with an idea through characterisation leads to effective reflection on the learning process. In personal, social and health education values and their relationship with a person's emotions are explored and reflected upon. Students in the sixth form consider the meaning of bereavement. In English they study the literary heritage, for instance of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience', as well as modern drama and prose.

62. Provision for pupils' and students' moral development is very good. Respect for each other is promoted by the approach of the teachers and reflected in the behaviour of the pupils. Teachers are good role models, and send out clear messages of what is acceptable and what is not. Most subjects acknowledge the part they can play in the moral development of pupils. Some subjects explore moral issues, such as conservation for example, in drama, English, geography and science. In the sixth-form, students of French consider the moral implications of the occupation of France during the second world war.

63. The provision for pupils social development is very good. In many subjects, pupils and sixth-form students have the opportunity to work positively in pairs and small groups, and as a result good social skills develop. The community education provision promotes social awareness and provides opportunities for pupils and students to meet a wide variety of people. A number of young people act as carers in aspects of school and community life. The 'listeners' scheme is valued by pupils. As part of the work-related programme pupils undertake community service with disabled young people. Work in sociology helps sixth-form students to see other people's points of view and how people respond to each other. District workers make in-puts to assemblies on how to care for others. Through community education there is a valued social drop-in centre for pupils and others at risk of social exclusion.

64. The provision for pupil's and sixth-form students' cultural development is very good. In most subjects this is well catered for. Theatre visits are organised. Cultural provision is an integral part of the curriculum in modern foreign languages. There also important school links further afield, notably in America and Japan. Pupils go to



concerts and, through their own performances provide entertainment for their parents and the community. They listen to a good range of quality music in lessons and very good instrumental lessons are available in the school. In ICT the schemes of work provide evidence that there is a real world context for ICT. Pupils also look at the cultural aspects of other faiths, including Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism in religious education. The English department is building a good stock of literature from other cultures.

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

### Strengths

- Arrangements for health, welfare and safety are very good.
- Pupils feel secure and make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Rates of attendance are below the national average.

65. The procedures for monitoring and supporting attendance are satisfactory and for behaviour and personal development are very good.

66. Parents describe the school as very caring and they are pleased with the way the school helps their children become mature and responsible.

67. The policy and practices that are in place regarding health and safety are very good. Since the previous inspection, the whole system for managing risk assessment has been upgraded and is now efficient. One matter of concern was brought to the school's attention during the inspection and arrangements were immediately put in hand to deal with it. A full time first-aider provides excellent support in the event of injury, illness and personal needs. An adequate number of other adults is trained to apply first aid. All pupils receive training in elementary first aid.

68. Satisfactory child protection procedures are in place. The staff handbook includes details of policy and guidance. Non-teaching and temporary staffs are advised of requirements as part of their induction although written guidance is not included in briefing documents for them.

69. Relationships between all adults in the school and pupils are respectful, trusting and constructive and provide the basis for an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel secure and valued. The pastoral system supports pupils very effectively and tutors play a key role in academic review mainly through weekly tutorials. The school nurse provides a drop-in surgery for pupils who have personal concerns and sixth-form students are attached to forms in the lower school so that younger pupils can seek their help and guidance if they wish to do so.

70. The school monitors each pupil's attendance every day and procedures are in place to follow up absence. An attendance mentor has been in place a year and works with the small number of pupils, and often their families, that have a poorer record of attendance. Satisfactory improvement is often achieved with some of these pupils. However, the school has an expectation that, because of what it offers, attendance will be high and this has led to some complacency. The school does not actively promote improved attendance and, although it firmly discourages family holidays in school time, it has, so far, had limited success in its attempts to substantially reduce absence that occurs owing to this time being taken out of school. The computerised system that is in place provides only limited information

about attendance and inhibits detailed analysis and use for targeting for improvement.

71. Behaviour is very well monitored and promoted. Expectations of good behaviour are high and the school applies the very best way of achieving high standards of behaviour by planning and providing lessons that are stimulating. The system for promoting positive achievement is effective. Bullying is rare but dealt with effectively and quickly when it occurs. A referral and monitoring system tracks the progress of pupils who have not conducted themselves appropriately. Behaviour management is effective; for example, pupils are sometimes withdrawn from lessons when they have been disruptive and are required to sit at a table in a corridor near a staffed area. The school does not provide a separate room for them where they can continue with their work under close supervision. A part-time behaviour support worker mentors pupils who have difficulty exercising self-control and a home-school liaison worker offers guidance to families about how to support improved behaviour at home. This service has only commenced this term and it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

72. Initiatives aimed at providing for those in danger of exclusion or helping those attracted by illicit substance abuse form part of the large programme of community-related activities provided in the school and illustrate very well its commitment to caring for pupils and including all in the opportunities the school provides. The location in the social area of pupils in Years 10 and 11 of the community education office and classrooms frequently used by adults encourages regular contact and appreciation that school does not end at the age of compulsion, contributing well to the strong feeling of belonging in the school.

73. Pupils' personal development is very good because of the nature of the support pupils receive and the range of experiences that are offered to them. The programme for personal, social and health education very effectively develops pupils' awareness of citizenship issues and their knowledge and application of key learning skills. In almost all subjects and through tutor groups pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. The very wide range of activities outside the classroom offers competitive experiences and involvement in the local and wider community. Excellent opportunities are offered to experience the lifestyles of people in other countries. Formal responsibility such as through a school council gives pupils representational roles and scope to influence the quality of their own community life.

## **Assessment**

### **Strengths**

- The monitoring of pupils' progress is good.
- Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Although the assessment procedures that are in place are good, available data is insufficiently used by some departments.

74. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school collects information about pupils' prior attainment both from primary schools and from tests to measure initial attainment when they join the school. This information is available to all teachers and teachers from the school visit Year 6 classes at primary schools to assess pupils' attainment and ensure continuity and progression in English, science and mathematics when they begin Year 7. The school's assessment policy is implemented by teachers and marking is regular. However, although all subjects have implemented the school's assessment policy, reference to National Curriculum levels is not common practice across the curriculum. As a result pupils and their parents do not know how they are performing in relation to what is expected for their age. Pupils are given good guidance through teachers' comments about how to improve their standard of work in history, geography, mathematics and music. In mathematics teachers use their knowledge of pupils' understanding through tests to adapt resources and activities to enable pupils of differing abilities to succeed in tasks but this is underdeveloped in the majority of subjects. For example, assessment rarely influences teachers' planning of work to meet identified learning needs. Planning is more tied to a syllabus than checking how a syllabus requirement might be tackled in ways that help pupils to learn effectively. In music teachers monitor pupils' progress closely not only in lessons but also in instrumental and extra-curricular classes and plan for their progress accordingly. This is an example of good practice.

75. The monitoring of pupils' progress is good. The school has a very thorough system in place to record pupils' attainment before they join the school and throughout Years 7 to 11. This data is available to all teachers. Data is used to predict pupils' grades at GCSE and, through regular meetings with pupils members of staff keep a close check on how they are progressing towards the targets set for them. From the time they join the school, all pupils have regular meetings with their form teachers to discuss their progress and set targets and in Years 10 and 11 to ensure they are on target for their predicted grades. Borderline C/D candidates GCSE examinations are monitored closely and are mentored to ensure they reach their potential. This whole area of review, evaluation, support and target-setting with pupils is part of a new development programme being launched by the school.

76. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good. Annual reviews of those pupils with statements of special educational need are carried out carefully and at the correct time. There is an efficient system for collecting information from subject teachers prior to review. All the requirements on the statements are fully met. Teachers are aware of the targets on pupils' individual education plans and nearly all take account of them in their planning and teaching. The special educational needs coordinator produces individual education plans as required by the Code of Practice. These contain suitable general targets and subject departments are expected to devise their own more specific targets. The quality of the targets set by subject departments, however, is uneven and there is not an effective system of monitoring. Although the school has a comprehensive data base tracking the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school, it does not make full use of it to measure the overall success of its special needs policy.

## Sixth form

### Assessment

#### Strengths

- The use of assessment to monitor progress is effective, leading to standards that are above average
- As a result, achievement in relation to attainment at the start of the sixth form is good.

77. Assessment of sixth-form students is regular, rigorous and informative. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. Subject teachers keep a very good record of the progress students make on their courses through regular and accurate marking that relates closely to examination standards. Formal assessment takes place in each term during the sixth form. Assessment tasks of different types but relevant to each course are set and marked by the class teachers. They discuss progress with individual students in their subject and then pass on the information to tutors. Tutors review the overall performance of each student and compare this with predicted grades. Additional support and help are identified where necessary.

78. This strategy of individual target setting and review is very good and informs all students about their standards and helps them to focus on what they need to do in improve further. In addition tutors have two days off timetable each year to mentor their students. The use of assessment by teachers to plan the next stage of learning is very good.

79. Students receive a commendation letter at the end of the autumn term that covers every aspect of their progress. A parents' consultation evening is held in February each year which students are encouraged to attend. Detailed written reports that are very informative are completed each year for students and their parents.

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

#### **Strengths**

- The guidance and support provided for sixth formers are excellent.
- Careers guidance is very good.

80. Inspectors agree with students' opinions that the information and advice that they are given, prior to commencing in the sixth form, are extremely good and the choice of courses allows students to follow programmes that are suited to their talents and career aspirations. The induction process is thorough and, for example, includes sixth formers talking to pupils in Year 11 in order to give them some idea of what to expect and to answer questions.

81. The procedures for health and safety are very good and the welfare needs of students are very well met through the tutor system and, for example, through the whole school services of a first aider and confidential drop-in surgery. Recreational and private study facilities are good. Relationships between adults in the sixth form and students are characterised by mutual respect and trust. Tutors know students well and students are confident that the school listens to them and that help will always be given when requested.

82. Overall, the support and environment that is provided enable students to feel extremely confident, valued and well placed to make the most of their opportunities in the sixth form.

83. As students continue their studies, tutors very carefully monitor their progress and, where appropriate, identify with students whether the best choice of course has been made. When it is apparent to both that it has not been the best choice, the school does its best to provide an acceptable alternative. Students' work is thoroughly and regularly assessed and students are clear about how to improve. Tutors discuss with students at the end of each term how they are progressing towards their targeted qualifications. Students confirm that teachers are accessible whenever they require help with difficulties that they encounter.

84. Students receive expert and timely advice, about careers and higher education and how to apply. This includes visits to and speakers from relevant

institutions. Special events, such as an industry day and forum, contribute to students' awareness of industry and provide further very good opportunities that help students make decisions about their future.

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

### Strengths

- Parents know it is a good school and are pleased.
- Parents feel part of the community of the school.

### Areas for improvement

- National Curriculum levels are not used in reports for parents.

85. Parents are right to be very pleased with the work of the school. The school has a very effective partnership with its parents. Parents' views are even more positive than they were at the time of the previous inspection.

86. Inspectors agree with the positive views that parents hold about the school including the sixth form. Parents are impressed with the leadership and management of the school, the quality of education generally and the support that is offered to their children. They are happy with the values that the school promotes and say it is approachable. They believe that the school expects pupils and students to work hard and do their best. Some parents are not satisfied with the amount of homework, or, in the sixth form, coursework, that is set. Inspectors judge that the work set appropriately supplements class work and contributes well to developing pupils' and students' independence in learning. Some parents feel that they are not well enough informed about pupils' and students' progress. Inspectors agree that the progress reports that are published each term are helpful indicators of trends in progress but the fact that they, as well as the annual school reports, use the school's own grading system does not give a clear enough message about attainment. The reports provide very little information about what pupils and students know, understand and can do and do not describe attainment with relation to national standards. The school acknowledges this and the matter is currently under review.

87. Parents are well informed about the life and work of the school mainly by the head teacher's monthly newsletter. Meetings are arranged to inform parents and for consultation with teaching staff about annual progress, subject choices, careers and higher education. Parents are appropriately involved in the periodic reviews of pupils who have special educational needs. The school seeks the views of parents from time to time often by the use of questionnaires. Parents support well the various activities and public performances arranged and, for example, provide accommodation for pupils and students on exchange visits. The parent teachers association, though small in numbers, always responds very well to the school's requests for donations to finance school improvements.

88. The school works very well with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. It has recently sent out a questionnaire to ascertain the satisfaction of these parents with the service provided by the school and the special educational needs coordinator. The results are overwhelmingly positive. There is regular contact between parents and the school; and nearly all parents attend the annual statement reviews.



89. Close, effective collaboration with, for example, district workers and guidance services, improves the effectiveness of the very good community education programme that promotes educational inclusion, extending the school's very good relationships with parents. Nonetheless, the school has difficulty in persuading some parents that it is unwise to take family holidays during school time; in some cases the negative impact on their children's continuing achievement can be severe.

90. Inspectors agree with all the positive views of the school held by sixth-form students. Students have a high regard for their teachers and the quality of the education that they receive. The large majority of students are pleased with the support and guidance they are offered, the choice of courses and the extra-curricular activities and enrichment experiences that are available. Inspectors do not agree with those students who are not satisfied with some aspects of the sixth form. Some respondents to the student questionnaires have not been in the sixth form long enough to form a sound judgement for example about the support and guidance they receive based on the assessment of their coursework. A significant number of students were less than positive about how they are treated and the extent to which their concerns are heeded. One of the more significant concerns was that some students would prefer to be allowed freedom of dress. The school listened and invited the sixth form committee to discuss the matter and table a proposal. The student committee decided that it was in the students' best interests to retain the school uniform. Inspectors judge that provision for the various needs of sixth-form students is better than a minority of students perceive it to be. The large majority of students are right to say that their experiences in the sixth form are enjoyable.

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

### **Strengths**

- The headteacher is well supported by his deputies and the assistant headteacher.
- The senior management board is effective.
- Governors know the school well ensure that development and change occur after their careful evaluation.
- Management and governance successfully promote an ethos of continuing improvement and self-evaluation.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The school does not meet statutory requirements to provide a daily collective act of worship for all pupils and not all subjects use ICT to support and enhance learning.

91. A significant reason for the success of Rossett School is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He has a clear sense of the sort of school it should be, having a responsible view of the nature of good comprehensive education. He knows what the school should seek to achieve and has the skill to put in place those measures necessary to ensure that the school is successful. His style means that he

is well-liked and respected by pupils, sixth-form students, staff and parents. His personality is such that he can make demands of pupils and staff that bring out the best in them; he does this with humour and concern for the well-being of the community of the school. In a very effective and sensitive whole-school assembly, his approach to the difficult world situation bonded the community of the school to a general awareness of the qualities that grow from taking account of the well-being of each other in the community of the school and in a more global sense. The school is one in which pupils and students mature and develop their own values. The overall ethos and ambiance of the school ensure that the values and attitudes shown by pupils in their relationships at school are secure and soundly based. Pupils have a developing understanding of the community of the school and their wider sense of their place in society. The community education provision on site is a reality as well as a symbol of this ethos. The headteacher promotes an attitude to learning that is always striving for excellence, whether it is the way teachers teach or pupils learn.

92. The headteacher is at the centre of a commitment to maintain and improve what the school has already achieved. It is developing its goals year by year. Actions have a clear purpose. For example, the senior management board tries to ensure that procedures and policies are of benefit to the efficient and effective operation of the school. Well-defined procedures give everyone a clear understanding of their own responsibilities and the roles of others. For example the roles of the two deputies and assistant headteacher complement one another and the mixture of strengths provides a dynamic for the school's day-to-day running and its longer term performance. Management receives significant support from administrative staff, technician and support assistants.

93. Under this leadership, the senior management board is seeking to place the school in the vanguard of appropriate educational development as a comprehensive school committed to inclusivity for all its pupils and staff. This is not fanciful theory, but day-to-day policy; all individuals are seen to have value and their successes and strengths are recognised whilst their needs are at the forefront of the planning, philosophy and behavioural patterns of all adults in the school. The school is always seeking to improve on its previous best. It is pleased with its achievements, but not complacent; it is looking for ways to be better still. It has in place monitoring strategies to check on performance of pupils and teachers; plans are currently being discussed to take the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress to more demanding and sophisticated levels in order to drive up standards, especially in Years 10 and 11.

94. Governors share the school management's desire for standards in all aspects of the life of the school to be as high as possible. The chair of the governing body has served the school well with informed knowledge and perception over many years. He leads a very effective governing body in its partnership with the school's management. Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities and where possible press the school's management to improve when requirements are not met.

95. The management of provision for special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs coordinator gives a very effective lead across the whole school on matters pertaining to special needs. He keeps meticulous records and ensures that all legal requirements are met. There is a very good system of collecting information about the progress of pupils with special needs. There are good professional links with outside agencies, whose expertise is used for the benefit of pupils. However, the quality of subject-devised individual education plans is not thoroughly monitored and the available data is not analysed to measure the success of the special needs policy. The governors maintain knowledge of matters relating to special needs through the agency of an interested, active and knowledgeable link governor.

96. Community education's contribution to the very good ethos for learning is excellent. Management by the headteacher through a very good, enterprising district manager, gives shape to the school's commitment to life-long learning. It amalgamates the school with the wider area. Provision is very well managed, covering many conventional adult education classes and closely monitored initiatives aimed at individuals and groups that are at risk, for example through

substance abuse or those in need of particular help, such as training for young persons involved in caring for others.

## Sixth form

### Strengths

- The sixth form is very well led and effectively managed. There is a clear sense of direction in the sixth form's development.
- The school's aims and values permeate sixth-form provision.
- Sixth formers make a significant contribution to the positive and innovative ethos of the school.

97. The head of the sixth form, his assistant and the tutorial team are conscientious and effective. They are thorough in ensuring that the needs of sixth formers are met. This attention to detail and need is part of their daily practice but also is highlighted in the successful personal, social and health education programme that occurs in tutor periods.

98. The school could improve this provision further by identifying sixth-form needs and development ideas separately in the school development plan. For example, a clear vision for the sixth form does not shine through; it would be beneficial if it did within the context of the whole school's vision. Nonetheless, the school's central vision of inclusivity is strong in the sixth form and practised in its daily life.

99. The governing body has fulfilled its role in holding the school to account by maintaining a good understanding of sixth-form issues and needs and responding to them in support of the school's management. It is sound policy that a representative of the sixth form attends meetings of the governing body. The sixth-form council is also active and contributes to the social and academic management of the sixth form.

100. The school undertakes an effective analysis and monitoring of examination results each year. This is part of departments' policies and leads to the setting of targets for future improvement. In this respect as well as general departmental management, leadership and management are excellent in music and very good in design and technology, biology, mathematics, psychology and sociology; leadership and management are good in art and design, English, history and physical education. Leadership and direction are satisfactory in French, geography and physics. A positive feature of the management of the sixth form is the analysis of the relationship between GCSE results of students and their performance in sixth-form examinations. The evidence that in most subjects students' achievement has been enhanced beyond what might have been expected is a strength of the sixth form. Monitoring and support of teaching and the sharing of good practice are part of the work of the best-led departments. It is an aspect of the whole school that management is wanting to develop in all departments. Nonetheless, the quality of teaching found overall in the sixth form is very good.

101. A strength of the sixth form ethos lies in its concept of service to the school as a whole and its community that is seen to be important. These features acknowledge that the sixth form is a part of a successful and thriving school and not a separate, isolated entity. As a result, prospective students have a clear choice

between this type of ambiance and the more self-contained provision usually found in a college of further education.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- Strategic use of resources is very good
- Principles of best value are successfully applied
- Financial planning is good and very good in the sixth form where provision is cost effective.
- The school gives very good value for money.

102. Financial planning is good and the control of expenditure is very good. New technology is used very effectively and specific grants are used very well for their designated purposes. Financial implications are very carefully taken into account when school development planning is in process. The main priorities are to improve the quality of learning, meet the needs of the pupils and carry forward minimal surpluses. Examples of improvements are a sixth-form building extension, a leisure area for Year 9 pupils, and increased ICT resources.

103. The views of governors, senior managers, staff, parents and pupils are considered and, whenever possible, included. Expenditure is very carefully monitored and purchasing is always carried out on the basis of best value. A recent example is the change to the school's catering arrangements in order to provide improved facilities, choice and value for pupils and students. Subject departments are required to submit development plans with costing in order to justify budget allocations and this minimises complacency and effectively promotes financial awareness.

104. The school uses the grants it receives for the designated purposes in a flexible way in order to achieve the best value and fully accounts for all funding. Very good use is made of modern technology in much of the school's routine work and, for example, to operate the school's academic recording system. However, the computerised system for attendance does not provide the school with adequate information for effective monitoring. Routine administration is carried out in a very efficient manner.

105. Income and expenditure are closely balanced. The budget carefully ensures that staffing costs match curricular needs in all areas of the school. This applies to Years 7 to 9 and, consequently, Years 10 and 11 are slightly subsidising the rest of the school. However, this does not have any detrimental effect on standards. The sixth form has for several years very successfully attracted a high percentage of post 16 students from the main school and very few have left before completing their courses. Approximately three out every four students go on to higher education and the remainder either seek or take up employment. Examination results are very good and students enjoy a wide choice of enrichment activities. In view of the costs, examination results and quality of experiences sixth-form provision is judged to be cost-effective.

106. In view of the progress that pupils and sixth-form students make, the quality of teaching, pupils' personal development and the richness of the whole curriculum and the fact that it is achieved at a cost that is only a little above the average for secondary schools, the school is deemed to provide very good value for money.



## Resources

### Strengths

- Overall provision is good
- Sixth-form accommodation is very good
- Provision of resources has improved since the previous inspection.
- The provision of reference sources for the independent study of sixth formers is mostly good.

### Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient books for pupils and students in some subjects.

107. Provision for staffing is good. The number of staff is appropriate for the needs of the curriculum. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of experience in the subjects they teach. The proportion of time spent teaching and the ratio of the number of pupils per teacher are both similar to the national average. The school benefits from a very stable teaching force, and there is little non-specialist teaching. The provision of technical support is generally good, with the exception of ICT where more is needed.

108. Staffing provision in the sixth form is well matched to the demands of the curriculum and overall is very good and has a positive impact on the standards achieved.

109. Procedures for the induction and professional development of teachers are good, and all aspects of staff development are well documented. Performance management is securely in place and responsibilities are effectively devolved through the school's existing line management procedures. Staff training needs are clearly determined and provided for in relation to both school and subject priorities. Newly-qualified teachers are well supervised and supported by the school, which also has an extensive commitment to supporting those students from higher education institutions training to become teachers.

110. Accommodation has improved significantly since the previous inspection following completion of the new teaching block and outdoor education facilities. It is now good overall. Most subjects are grouped together which improves the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching. Specialist accommodation is usually good, and is excellent in music and very good in design and technology. Provision for physical education is enhanced by the shared use of the leisure centre with the community and the specialist accommodation that is available for outdoor education. Only in religious education is accommodation unsatisfactory, where the location and condition of the temporary classrooms are adversely affecting standards.

111. As at the previous inspection, sixth-form accommodation is very good. However, some time-tabled rooms are small for the size of groups, for example in psychology, physical education, and business studies.

112. Overall the provision of resources is good throughout the school. Expenditure on resources has improved since the previous inspection but the percentage allocated from the school budget remains below the national average. There has been a significant improvement in the number of computers and the provision is now close to that found nationally. This has led to standards rising in pupils' use of computers.

113. Resources are very good in music and physical education and good in English, mathematics and design and technology. Since the previous inspection resources in science have improved and there are now adequate books and apparatus. However, there are insufficient textbooks available in religious education and modern foreign languages.

114. The library-resource centre is well managed. It is particularly well used for English and mathematics lessons where work is supported by effective material produced by teachers and the librarian. The stock of books is good but there are insufficient works of fiction to support study in English. Lunchtimes are notable for the very high use made of the library by pupils who take pleasure in reading and improving their research skills. There is a good careers library that is also well used.

### **Resources in the sixth form**

115. Sixth-form students make good use of the library-resource centre for computer-based research and the good stock of reference books and journals. Learning in music and physical education is well supported by a very good range of resources. There have been significant improvements in resources for vocational education and students' learning is further enhanced by visits, external speakers and video material. The quality of computers has been improved for sixth formers and now meets industrial standards. In sociology and geography in the sixth form there are insufficient books to meet fully the learning needs of students.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

116. In order to improve further the standards achieved by pupils and sixth-form students, governors, the headteacher and staff should seek to:

- (1) extend the use of available assessment data to promote the progress of all pupils and plan work for them more effectively, especially in Years 7 to 9;  
(Paragraphs: 74, 93, 149, 173, 174)
- (2) use National Curriculum criteria and levels when assessing work and reporting to parents;  
(Paragraphs: 173, 211)
- (3) raise standards in modern foreign languages;  
(Paragraphs: 9, 32, 188-190)

### Sixth form

- (1) take steps to raise the performance of students capable of obtaining the higher A and B grades;  
(Paragraphs: 13, 77, 100, 230, 244, 252, 278, 290, 297, 305)
- (2) improve results in chemistry, German, media studies and physics;  
(Paragraph: 9)
- (3) strive for more consistency of standards across subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 13, 16, 100, 228)

Minor weaknesses, improvement of which should be part of the governors' action plan:

- meet statutory requirement in the use of ICT in all subjects in Years 7 to 11;  
(Paragraphs: 12, 94, 147, 180, 182, 186, 187, 198)
- meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. (Paragraph: 94)
- improve provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11.  
(Paragraphs: 213, 221)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	152
	Sixth form	74
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		77

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	7	36	74	30	4	1	0
Percentage	4.6	23.7	48.8	19.7	2.6	0.6	0.0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	7	22	34	11	0	0	0
Percentage	9.5	29.7	45.9	14.9	0.0	0.0	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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1068	189
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	67	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	206	2

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	26

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	57

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
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	133	99	232

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	105	107
	Girls	75	80	82
	Total	154	185	189
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (70)	80 (72)	81 (72)
	National	64 (64)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (37)	59 (50)	53 (32)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	94	98	105
	Girls	81	71	79
	Total	175	169	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (65)	73 (82)	79 (70)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (28)	52 (47)	51 (37)
	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	110	104	214

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	46	89	99
	Girls	59	102	106
	Total	105	191	205
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (56)	89 (92)	96 (97)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	86.6 (90.6)	94.5 (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	37.2
	National	39.1 (38.4)

Percentages 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	12	86
	National		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
	2001	33	30	63

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	16.3	20.2	18.2	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	16.9 (17.7)	17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)	N/A	N/A	N/A

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	5
Indian	2
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	18
White	1214
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	21	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	78.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

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

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	338

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	22.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3 336 832
Total expenditure	3 348 749
Expenditure per pupil	2 668
Balance brought forward from previous year	96 212
Balance carried forward to next year	84 296

### *Recruitment of teachers*

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.5

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	1257
Number of questionnaires returned	524

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	56	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	52	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	55	5	1	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	54	15	4	3
The teaching is good.	30	60	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	47	14	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	31	50	11	2	6
The school is well led and managed.	50	41	4	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	49	4	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	48	8	1	10

## **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 very good.

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of attainment are above average.
- Teaching is consistently very good. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and encourage them to be fully involved in their learning.
- Pupils learn very well in lessons that are challenging and well planned.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning and are very well behaved in class

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Decisions about the contents of learning programmes for pupils in Years 7 to 9 rely too heavily on individual teachers.
- Pupils' underachievement, especially that of boys, is not supported by consistent methods of tracking progress.

117. Standards of work seen during the inspection are consistently above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good. Pupils' achievements are good by the end of Year 9 in relation to standards on entry to the school and by the end of Year 11 in relation to standards when they begin Year 10. Pupils' positive attitudes also cause the quality of their learning to be very good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

118. When pupils come to the school their levels of attainment are average. As a result of very good teaching, together with their own hard work and positive attitudes, they reach above average standards of attainment by the end of Year 9. This indicates good achievement. In recent years National Curriculum tests results have been consistently above national averages and have improved in line with the upward national trend. Results have been on a par with those achieved nationally by schools with similar backgrounds. However, measured against the 2000 national figures for each gender group, boys' results show that they are performing less well than girls. Achievement remains good in Years 10 and 11. In the 2000 GCSE examinations pupils succeeded in gaining above national average results in English. In addition almost all pupils were entered for GCSE English literature and here again results were above national averages, which represents good achievement across the two years. In 2001, results in language and literature improved slightly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the small sets where their needs can be full met. Two pupils in Year 10 for whom English is an additional language are well supported by a peripatetic specialist teacher so that they make good progress in line with other pupils in the class. However, the under-

achievement of boys and the low numbers of pupils who gained the highest grades in the 2000 GCSE results indicate good rather than very good achievement overall.

119. Work seen during the inspection is above average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good speaking and listening skills, as seen in class when they clearly and readily answer teachers' questions or when they collaborate effectively in small groups. They complete written work carefully. The writing of pupils with special educational needs is well presented and mainly in sentences, although spelling is weak. Pupils of average attainment produce much good extended writing, accurately punctuated and with sound spelling. All pupils make appropriate use of ICT for information gathering and presenting their work. The written work of higher-attaining pupils is confident and well developed, showing good control of expression. From all pupils autobiographical and imaginative writing is particularly impressive, as seen in Year 7 work on the 'I, Me, Myself' unit. Their range of vocabulary and ability to build sentences show the positive impact of literacy teaching. Standards of reading aloud are above average and when pupils talk or write about their reading of poems and stories, they show good understanding. Work on poetry is particularly good as seen in outstanding examples of writing about Shelley's poem, 'Ozymandias'.

120. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good independent notes on texts such as 'Macbeth'. Their writing is often fluent and assured showing good use of paragraphing and above-average levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Lower-attaining pupils construct well-organised and accurate written coursework assignments through a very effective process of drafting and re-drafting. As in earlier years pupils in Years 10 and 11 write very good descriptive pieces but now they use poetic language to greater effect. Analysis of literary texts, such as J B Priestley's, 'An Inspector Calls', shows good awareness of character but the majority of pupils are more confident in their reading of texts than they are in discussing literature, for example looking at language and themes in Penelope Lively's short story, 'The Darkness Out There'. Higher-attaining pupils write well and show very good understanding of difficult texts but they struggle to produce the highest levels of work in response to complex assignment titles.

121. Although teaching and learning in lessons are very good, pupils' current achievement over time is best described as good. This indicates that standards of teaching and learning have recently risen and that pupils are beginning to benefit from the literacy strategies that now underpin all English teaching. Perhaps the greatest strength of teaching across the department is a willingness to let pupils have responsibility for aspects of their learning. A Year 11 class were asked to work in groups on different themes emerging from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and then a spokesperson passed on the outcome of each discussion to other groups. In this way, each group felt responsibility to the whole class for their work and learnt quickly. There were also opportunities for pupils to develop advanced speaking and listening skills, which the teacher assessed. This was very good teaching and learning. In another Year 9 lesson pupils had been working on autobiographical writing and assumed the identity of an historical figure of their choice. They worked enthusiastically in groups preparing a chat show performance in which they would be questioned as their chosen character. The teacher made very clear to pupils what was required to achieve the highest standards of work and excellent learning

resulted. In general teachers manage their pupils very well. Relationships are positive and teachers insist upon high standards of behaviour. Most lessons have a well-planned structure and learning takes place at a good pace. Lower-attaining pupils are particularly well taught in lessons where firm control and a friendly supportive environment are combined with high expectations and the celebration of pupils' successes. As a result pupils remain well motivated and are able to sustain concentration right to the end of lessons. Basic skills are very well taught and pupils learn quickly. Another important aspect of the very good teaching across the department is the detailed marking which helps all pupils to understand what they must do to improve their work. Learning is less successful when teachers do not focus sharply on what pupils are to learn but merely concentrate on completing activities without explaining their purpose.

122. Leadership and management are good and teachers work closely together to raise standards. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Delegation of responsibilities has improved and there are regular meetings for departmental planning. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 now matches that in Years 7 to 9. There is wider use of ICT across the department. The teaching of literacy skills has improved since the previous inspection but there is still some way to go in fully meeting new literacy requirements. One important area for further development lies in the schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The responsibility for meeting National Curriculum and National Literacy Strategy objectives currently rests largely with individual teachers. The focus now is upon devising and agreeing common units of work for each year that cover the necessary ground. This will leave teachers free to consider how best each unit can be taught to meet the needs of all pupils in their groups. Day to day marking is very effective and pupils' record books now chart ground that they have covered. Teachers already do much good work giving extra help at lunch times to pupils who ask. However, the procedures for tracking pupils' progress are inconsistent and not reliable for identifying under-achieving pupils, especially boys, who need additional support. The school is making plans to improve these procedures.

### **Basic skills: the use of skills of literacy to support learning across the curriculum**

123. Across the curriculum the teaching of literacy is good. The school has a policy document indicating departmental responsibilities for including literacy teaching strategies in handbooks and reviewing progress at departmental meetings; these requirements do not appear to be effectively monitored and the provision varies from subject to subject. There is much very good work within the special educational needs department as seen in the Year 7 literacy support groups where pupils follow individual learning programmes with an emphasis on daily reading. In general pupils' standards of literacy are above average so that they meet few difficulties in coping with the reading and writing demands of all subjects. Speaking and listening skills are also above average, although many older pupils are a little more cautious when speaking than is often the case with young people of their age. Very good examples of literacy practice are seen in design and technology lessons where pupils have good opportunities for varied writing tasks and where teachers

offer very good support for pupils' writing through use of dictionaries, focus on technical vocabulary and active support for pupils' use of correct English. History and geography teachers provide pupils with good opportunities for extended writing; this also a developing feature in subjects such as mathematics, science, religious education and physical education. In most subjects there is little support offered for pupils' reading although in design and technology and in art and design there is good emphasis on pupils' reading. In most teaching areas key words are on display but departments vary in how well they use them and there is no clear evidence of an effective whole-school policy at work.

## Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and often excellent; it is based on a sure knowledge of drama and theatrical conventions.
- Pupils are learning effectively with commitment and enthusiasm.
- Standards are generally above average, despite low levels of previous learning in drama.

### Areas for improvement

- There is an insufficiently planned provision for drama in Years 7 to 9.

124. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Year 10 and average in Year 11. This is the result of very good and frequently excellent teaching and the very positive attitudes of pupils, especially in Year 10, to their learning in drama. Given their limited experience of drama in Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is very good.

125. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were below average. This followed a difficult period for drama in the school. This is reflected in the standards being achieved by the current Year 11 that lack some of the dramatic awareness usually found at this stage of the course. Working on scripts in preparation for an examination assessment, the level of application was variable, some being to standards just above average, but overall pupils lacked the engagement and focus found in the new Year 10.

126. A new and vital provision is now developing, however, being felt in Year 10 especially, with many pupils already considering staying with the subject into AS courses in the sixth form. Work seen is already beginning to show the promise that five terms later achieves success in examinations. Pupils were working on small-group scenes around particular issues. They used a range of dramatic conventions to extend their work, deepen their characterisation and fashion a sense of form and shape to scenes that will form part of their course assessment.

127. Pupils showed clear understanding of conventions such as 'hot-seating' and 'thought-tracking' and used them to enhance their work. Two of the groups were

presenting work to a standard that was well above average. They were prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and seek to take it beyond the stereotype when working on young pregnancy implications or the stress felt in some family situations. They examined cause and effect through re-running scenes in different ways. They successfully used the convention of 'asides to the audience' to point some of the sub-text of their scenes.

128. Pupils' attitudes to their work are excellent and they achieve success owing to their own efforts and particularly skilful teaching. The teaching has an excellent grasp of the opportunities of the subject to extend pupils' thinking and feeling through engagement in character. In the Year 10, as well as one Year 11 lesson observed, the teacher spent sufficient time with each small group over two lessons to help pupils deepen and extend the substance and execution of their drama. Through skilful questioning and timely interventions, this teaching helped pupils approach social issues with an open and curious, imaginative focus. Girls and boys worked well together and achieved similar standards in their work. One pupil from an ethnic minority background worked well and to a similar level as his classmates. Another was a central figure in a drama about racial prejudice. All pupils did well when asked to evaluate how well their scenes were being performed at this stage in their preparation, even to the extent of discussing whether the appropriate language register was being used by certain characters.

129. Learning in the drama studio is lively, effective and stretching young performers technically and emotionally. This quality is a result of very good and often excellent teaching. To maximise the potential of the subject as a central feature in the culture of the school, as well as a means to academic success in the subject, a surer foundation must be provided in Years 7 to 9. Staffing is adequate to meet the demands of the current time-table, but if proper provision, in the spirit of the National Curriculum, is to be in place in Years 7 to 9, additional expertise in drama has to be acquired through training or a further appointment. The full scope of the drama space cannot currently be exploited as lighting has been removed to another area.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### **Strengths**

- The planning for lessons is very good.
- The use of computers to support learning is effective.
- Leadership gives a clear direction to the subject.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of assessment data is insufficient to assess and monitor pupils' achievement.
- The use of time at the beginning and end of lessons is not always effective in sharing aims with pupils and reviewing what they have learned.

130. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Pupils' achievement in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 is good in Years 7 to 9 and, in relation to standards at the start of Year 10, is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes, the quality of the teaching and activities matched to pupils' needs cause the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

131. In the 2000 national tests at the age of 14, attainment was above average when compared with all schools and similar schools. These results represent good achievement of higher attainers in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7. Results improved in line with national trends from 1996 to 1999 but fell back slightly in 2000. Results were similar in 2001. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above average. These results represent good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Boy's results were similar to those of girls. The proportion gaining A\*-G was above average. Pupils' performed as well in mathematics as they did in most other subjects studied. Results in 2001 were not as good, although still above average, and achievement here was only satisfactory. Until 2001 results have improved steadily since the previous inspection.

132. In the work seen standards overall are above those expected at the age of 14. By the end of Year 9 number skills are satisfactory for the majority of pupils; higher and average attaining-pupils handle numbers confidently during mental activities although lower-attaining pupils still have difficulty with doing calculations in their head. Overall standards are above average for the highest-attaining pupils. Algebraic skills are developing well in most pupils; average-attaining pupils solve equations. Higher-attaining pupils use trigonometry confidently to find lengths and angles although lower-attaining pupils have difficulty estimating the sizes of angles. Most pupils have a good understanding of shape and space. Data-handling is good; average and lower-attaining pupils calculate probabilities. Problem-solving skills are being developed well; by the end of Year 9 most pupils identify patterns and establish rules.

133. Standards in the work seen are above those expected at the age of 16. Number skills are generally good for the majority of pupils. Higher-attaining pupils use numbers in standard form whilst average-attaining pupils estimate answers to calculations accurately and use significant figures. Algebraic skills continue to develop well. Higher-attaining pupils solve simultaneous and quadratic equations. The pupils' understanding of shape and space are good. Average attainers use Pythagoras' Theorem to find lengths of sides whilst lower-attaining pupils calculate areas of triangles accurately. Data-handling skills are good; average attaining pupils in Year 11 use frequency tables to calculate a range of measures. Problem-solving skills are satisfactory and most pupils, including the lower attainers, identify patterns and rules, predict and test hypotheses. Higher-attaining pupils extend their investigations appropriately.

134. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often very good. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection. As a result of this good teaching the quality of learning is good. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have good subject knowledge that helps them explain new concepts clearly and develop pupils' skills and understanding. Lesson-planning is good; good links are made between lessons. Teachers make good use of computers to develop pupils ICT skills and support learning in lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher used the computers effectively to develop pupils' understanding of estimating angles. Starter activities are being used well in some lessons to develop pupils' mental skills although some were often too short. Generally, teachers do not yet share the aims for lessons with pupils at the beginning of lessons and the time at the end of lessons is not always used effectively to find out what pupils have learned. Teachers manage and organise pupils well. This results in pupils usually listening attentively during discussions, concentrating on their tasks and cooperating well with each other. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is least effective where teachers do not have this good management of classes. Questioning of pupils is generally good although sometimes teachers do not involve enough pupils in discussions. Appropriate methods are used to help pupils learn. For example, in a very good lesson with the lowest attaining pupils in Year 7, most of whom have special educational needs, the two teachers worked as a team and ensured that pupils made very good progress with their understanding of subtracting numbers. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good due to good teaching, tasks well matched to their needs and good support provided in lessons. Teachers set clear expectations for the pupils, which produces good behaviour. Effective use is made of homework to build upon pupils' learning. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Some work does not have enough comments about what pupils should do to improve their work. Attention is given to pupils' literacy skills; key words are displayed in classrooms and the spelling of new words is emphasised in lessons.

135. Leadership and management are very good. Very good schemes of work ensure progression for all groups of pupils as they move through the school. They are suitably prepared to match the needs of different groups of pupils and to incorporate the new numeracy strategy. The leadership in mathematics provides a clear direction for the development of the subject. Teachers support each other well. There is a clear commitment to raising standards by all teachers. A formal process for the monitoring of teaching is in place and is having an impact on improving standards in the subject. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment are good. The results are used well to encourage pupils' progress as they move through the school. The assessment information could be used more effectively to monitor the subjects' overall performance in external tests and examinations.

136. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good. Better use is made of assessment information when planning work. Work now meets the needs of all pupils. There is more variety in teaching methods. Standards overall have improved.



## **Basic skills: the use of numeracy skills to support learning across the curriculum**

137. The effectiveness of the teaching of the basic skills of numeracy across the school is good. Sufficient attention is being given in most subjects to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. For example, in science the introductory course in Year 7 includes measuring skills. In design and technology numeracy is referred to in booklets provided for pupils' projects. The lack of a school policy for numeracy across the curriculum however is resulting in an inconsistent approach, although much of the teaching is usually good.

138. Standards of numeracy are generally above average across the school. These are reflected in, for example, science where pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very confident in handling data and drawing graphs. They use formulae well in investigations. In design and technology pupils use pie charts and scatter diagrams confidently to analyse surveys. Good measuring skills are demonstrated in product design. In business education pupils use a range of statistical methods confidently to analyse data. In geography pupils use a variety of graphs confidently and accurately. In art and design, pupils show good spatial awareness in sculptural forms.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching is good and contributes to above-average standards pupils achieve.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers and the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Insufficient use is made of ICT.
- Day-to-day assessment is not used sufficiently to plan clear learning goals for different groups of pupils.

139. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is good. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9 improving from average to above average standards. These standards are sustained in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good overall and this helps the quality of learning in science to be good and helps pupils to make good progress as they move through the school.

140. Results in the attainment tests in 2001 for 14 year-olds were above the national average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were above the national average and 2001 were broadly in line with the national standard.

141. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were above average. Higher-attaining pupils studying for the triple science award demonstrate thorough knowledge of the nitrogen cycle and explain the process of eutrophication and the drawbacks of intensive farming. Pupils studying for the double science award show good knowledge of the reactivity series in chemistry, though considerable teaching skill was required to convince them of the difficult concept that a winch holding a car in place was not doing any work. In another lesson, pupils given the opportunity to do independent research on various aspects of energy transfer along food chains produced acetate summaries of their work and presented their findings to their classmates. All pupils achieved well. Lower-attaining pupils identify foods as carbohydrates or proteins and remember the terms 'lipids' and 'enzymes' from previous work. A class investigating why penguins huddle together in blizzards explained why there was a reduction in heat loss but struggled to explain some of their anomalous results.

142. On entry to the school the pupils of Year 7 were achieving average standards. Classes in Year 7 are of mixed attainment and spend the first three weeks of the year on a course of basic scientific skills. This clearly has beneficial effects on learning because the Year 7 work seen during the inspection was already above average after just one half-term. In all classes pupils showed enthusiasm for science and a willingness to think. One group designed an experiment to show how the eye reads a page of text, another learned well from a lesson on opposing forces whilst a third quickly acquired the skill of using a microscope. In Years 8 and 9, higher-attaining pupils know the elements of an electric circuit and explain diffusion in terms of moving particles. Middle-attaining pupils carry out tests on different foods and lower-attaining pupils work well on investigations to find out how heat loss is affected by wearing socks and how to make jelly dissolve faster.

143. The few pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups are fully integrated and achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs often have effective help in class from assistant teachers and achieve well. All teachers are made aware, through the department, of the needs of pupils they teach. The gender of the pupils has no significant effect upon achievement.

144. As all pupils have an equitable share of the good teaching available, the good achievement is uniform across all years and attainment levels. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

145. Scientific investigation occurs in many lessons for pupils of all levels of attainment and although systematic emphasis on the skills of scientific enquiry is not always evident, test results show that pupils generally score well in this aspect of science. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

146. Pupils' literacy skills are good, as is the presentation of written work. Topic spelling tests are provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and although some had trouble spelling 'temperature' the spelling of scientific terms is good overall.

147. There is an increase in the mathematical aspects of science as pupils move through the school; calculations and plotting of graphs being more common in Years 10 and 11. Numeracy skills are good. The extent to which learning in science is enhanced by the use of ICT is unsatisfactory now as it was at the time of the previous inspection.

148. Teaching in science is good. No lesson was seen that was less than satisfactory. In the majority of lessons seen, teaching is good and often very good. This is an improvement on the teaching seen at the time of the previous inspection. Of greatest effect on learning is the way in which the teachers' command of the subject enables them to impart new information clearly and precisely in portions that are carefully weighted to suit the aptitudes and abilities of the pupils. Whilst rare lessons were seen to lack the challenge of pace or open-ended questions, most did not and the pupils applied themselves to tasks with enthusiasm. Teachers' expectations are high and class management is good. Teacher-pupil relationships are very good, based on mutual respect, with teachers providing good role models. Though the work of the teachers is well supported by comprehensive schemes of

work and lesson plans, teachers are prepared to move beyond the parameters of these and use a variety of methods to stimulate learning. Planning of lessons is good and although occasional lessons needed to be rushed at the end, most had time remaining to remind the pupils of the learning aims introduced at the beginning and discuss the extent to which they were achieved. Homework is well used to extend and consolidate class-work. Lessons give a thorough coverage of the breadth and depth of National Curriculum science.

149. Procedures for tracking the progress of pupils are good but the assessment information is mainly used to facilitate grouping of pupils. 'I have learned--' lists are provided at the end of topics but these are used as revision lists rather than an opportunity for self- assessment. Day-to-day marking whilst diligently executed does not specify ways in which pupils can improve. This was also noted at the time of the previous inspection. Since then improvement overall has been satisfactory.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

- An effective and hard-working team of teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- Standards achieved in craft skills are applied creatively to all aspects of work in art and design.
- Independent research skills are well developed.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The attainment of boys by the end of Year 9 is not high enough.
- There is insufficient use of computers to generate work in art and design.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to visit galleries and work with professional artists in residence in school.
- Pupils are not good at expressing opinions and judgements when writing about art and design.

150. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. Given the mixed experience of art and design pupils have on entry to the school, this represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 and good achievement in Years 10 and 11. This healthy development is the result of good teaching and the positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils that lead to effective learning.

151. In the 2000 assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9, pupils achieved levels 4 to 7, which is within national expectations. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, pupils' results at grades A\* to C were below the national average. Girls did less well in art and design that year than in other subjects. GCSE results have improved significantly in recent years and the 2001 results continued this positive trend.

152. Pupils arrive in Year 7 often with very limited previous experiences. Achievement from Year 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils quickly learn the essential elements of line, tone, colour and pattern and make progress in acquiring new skills in well-resourced drawing and painting exercises. They measure out and scale-up their designs to standards that are average. They develop creative three-dimensional skills in clay, card and mixed media sculpture to a broadly typical standard. They learn how to look and record accurately from organic forms and develop this work imaginatively and expressively. They know about different artists and art of other cultures and employ this knowledge to enhance their own work. In

poster-design topics, there are good opportunities to express their views on health-related social concern such as smoking.

153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. They show interest in their art and design activities, are enthusiastic, work hard and make progress in acquiring new knowledge and craft skills in lessons. Occasionally a number of boys in Year 9 who show little interest, do not apply themselves and make poor progress. In these circumstances, teachers' strategies to promote good behaviour and attitudes are not having a sufficient impact and new approaches are needed. The open access lunchtime sessions make a very positive contribution to the quality and quantity of work produced. These sessions are constantly buzzing with significant numbers of enthusiastic and hardworking pupils.

154. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and are better than examination results would indicate as pupils, following a revised curriculum, build on their previous experiences and skills. They make good progress in lessons aided by frequent teacher demonstrations of how to draw and paint well. Achievement over these two years is good. Pupils demonstrate growing independent learning skills, taking responsibility for developing their work in depth, such as when one pupil researched and extensively illustrated the works of Albrecht Durer, utilising new pastel and wax and wash techniques. Observational recording work is good. Colour is used well and often in a lively manner. Work in sketchbooks is good with lots of experimental effects and supportive annotation which is fostering personal views. Good graphic skills are developed in pop-up and imaginative book productions. Spatial awareness, demonstrated in delightful paper and wire sculpture, is again good due to the practice of offering an initial range of alternative designs, selecting and amending the best. Occasional external visits, for a few, such as to the Royal Armouries, have a positive effect on their knowledge which they creatively apply in book illustration, using their computer skills to explore and select type fonts. Pupils show a very positive attitude towards their work. Year 11 pupils, both boys and girls, were notable for the extra time they gave to their work at lunchtime and the 'straight in and on with their individual task' approach to lessons.

155. There are good opportunities for pupils to consider and express moral values, as in their graphic poster designs inspired by their study of the second world war holocaust. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress in lessons, aided by effective learning support staff and teachers' close attention to individual needs. This leads to overall achievement in relation to prior attainment being good.

156. Homework at both stages is used effectively to extend lesson activities and is often successful in establishing a culture of independent research. Throughout the school, pupils develop sound computer skills in researching the Internet for facts about artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe. They also make good use of Internet images when studying the art of other cultures, such as African or Aboriginal, but much of the textual information they find is repeated parrot fashion with the result that pupils do not sufficiently express their own thoughts, feelings and opinions on art. Strategies to remedy this are in place but are not yet effective. Key words to promote the use of an art and design vocabulary are identified but would be more

effectively used if commonly displayed across all studios. In Years 7 to 9 computers are not yet used to generate creative art. The absence of opportunities throughout Years 7 to 11 for pupils to visit galleries and to work with artists-in-residence is limiting their awareness of a range of historical and contemporary art.

157. Teaching is consistently good and at times is very good. Assessment and recording of achievement are used effectively and use a wide range of data and tracking systems to move pupils on. Reports to parents identify what the pupils need to do in order to improve. Teaching is notable for the impact that regular, good demonstration of craft skills and exposure to exemplar work has on establishing craft standards. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject. They plan well, set demanding tasks and create a positive and visually stimulating working environment in which pupils are satisfactorily involved. Pupils are managed well in what are often cramped conditions. Teachers' expectations are high in a caring and supportive environment with the result that pupils respond well. In lessons seen throughout Years 7 to 11 there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

158. This is a well-managed department and improvement is good since the previous inspection. The revised scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is now providing all pupils with an equitable and balanced broad-based experience and examination results have improved.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Pupils achieve good results in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils have a good grasp of the design processes.
- Teaching is good: lessons reinforce effective use of the designing and making processes.
- Portfolios of Year 10 and 11 work show teachers' expectations of the best possible standards.
- The subject is very well led and managed. This is an effective faculty.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Apart from maintaining an overall push to sustain and improve standards, there are no significant areas for improvement.

159. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. Pupils come to the school with widely diverse experiences of design and technology. Standards in Year 7 to 9 are average and above average in Years 10 and 11. These standards are achieved because teaching is good and occasionally very good or excellent. The achievement of pupils in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 is good; it is good in Year 10 and 11 in relation to the start of the GCSE courses. Pupils' attitudes, the breadth of the curriculum, the very good use made of resources, the opportunities made available to all pupils and the

consistently good teaching cause the quality of pupils' learning to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

160. In 2000, by the age of 14 pupils' overall level of attainment assessed by teachers is average. Almost all achieve suitable levels and roughly one quarter of pupils achieve more. In relation to standards at the start of Year 7. This represents good achievement. The good progress made is the result of good teaching and learning. The knowledge and skill of working with materials and tools are well established in Year 7. In resistant materials for example, pupils become familiar with handling tools safely. They measure accurately and shape the wood with growing confidence. Above-average pupils in Year 9 show equally good levels of attainment in research and analysis and high standards of self-evaluation when reflecting on their work. The clock project, for instance, shows good communication skills for the presentation of design ideas. Standards achieved by lower-attaining pupils in the computer-aided-design (CAD) session were comparable with others in the group. This was a result of the effectiveness of the teacher's response to the wide range of pupils' level of understanding. The topic of exploring how to produce a design assembly was a challenging one. All portfolio work of Years 7 to 9 shows a sound application of the steps in the design process. Technical language is used accurately by all pupils. Numeracy skills are good. They are evident in the quality of annotation on working diagrams, in the variety of graphs used to explain results and in the quality of finished products. The teachers are good role models. There is little difference in the standards of work at the end of Year 9 produced by boys and girls.

161. By the age of 16, standards are above average. The above average pupils on the GCSE graphic products course make positive contributions for drawing out the key points for a specification. Design skills of pupils are as strong as making skills. The skills of computer-aided-design, computer-aided- manufacture and other software applications are good.

162. Above-average pupils undertake extensive and in-depth design work and produce quality products in food technology, resistant materials, textiles technology, electronics and graphics. Whilst the portfolios of the below average pupils are not as extensive nor as mature in their approach to the work, nevertheless they show a satisfactory grasp of the subject. All pupils use literacy and numeracy skills effectively to attain high standards.

163. The proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A\* to C in the 2000 GCSE examination results in full course electronic products, food technology, graphic products, textile technology and resistant materials was above the national average. Similar success was achieved at grades A\* to G. Although the percentage results in resistant materials at the higher grades appear not to be quite as strong as previously, the trend in 2001 continues to be one of improvement. Results in the GCSE examination in home economics and child development were above average. The trend continues to be one of improvement during 2001. The gap between girls and boys widened slightly in the 2001 results. Whilst girls attained well above the national average, boys attained results that were above. The proportion of pupils gaining an A grade was above the national averages but below at A\*.



164. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching in just over one in four lessons is very good or excellent; additionally, in well over half of all lessons teaching was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. Teachers know their pupils well. Lessons are planned, structured effectively and organised in such a way that pupils make good progress in their learning. In Year 8 for example, the pace meets the learning needs of pupils, the questions and the insistence by the teacher on accuracy in making paper patterns has a positive impact on the pupils' understanding of designing before making. Similarly in a Year 7 class working in resistant materials, the teacher's high level of subject expertise enabled all pupils to talk confidently about tools and their purposes. They carry out making activities with enthusiasm. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. In all areas pupils are taught by highly-skilled and knowledgeable teachers. This has a direct impact on the pupils' achievements and their progress in learning. Pupils respect the teachers' expertise and are well motivated by the challenges set them. They concentrate well in their lessons. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE lesson in electronic products, progress for the large proportion of below average and special needs pupils is good. The immediate impact of the tough challenges being set them, the very high expectations of them and the way in which the teacher relates to the class sets a strong framework for success and enjoyment. Also in work in Year 10 GCSE textile technology progress is rapid. The teacher's very good and effective organisational and management skills underpin the pupils' methods of working. They respond very positively to the view of them working as young designers in industry. Consequently standards are high, achievement and learning are good. Pupils make good progress in the knowledge of the design processes and the making of quality products. The well-judged intervention by teachers when learning slows helps those who feel insecure with complex ideas. In a Year 9 designing class for example the persistence and patience of the teacher helped pupils through the difficulties of applying a sophisticated software program to their work. Management of pupils is very good in all focus areas. Pupils listen carefully and respond well to the use of constructive criticism of their work. In Year 10 and 11 particularly, the marking of work and the comments on how to improve still further are valued by all pupils. Pupils work safely. The exposition of knowledge and skills by the teachers provides very good models for pupils. Aims for lessons are made clear to pupils. They act as a strong framework for learning. Portfolios and class work of higher-attaining boys and girls exemplify extended research and analytical skills, high quality annotation of drawings, very good use of literacy and numeracy skills in general and good use of home computers to enhance the quality of their work. There is little difference between the progress in learning of boys and girls. However some lower-attaining boys prefer making activities to designing work. The effective management skills of teachers maintain satisfactory standards and progress in lessons for this demanding group of boys. The high expectations of all pupils make a significant impact on the consistent progress in lessons.

165. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Examination results at GCSE level have improved over time and are now above the national average. Standards of teaching have improved consistently. Staffing is better matched to the needs of the specialist areas. There is now a new head of faculty in place.

166. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of what has to be done to improve further. Monitoring of the work of the department is systematic and makes a significant impact on standards achieved. The high quality of planning by all the teachers provides consistency in all the focus areas. The breadth of the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities provide all pupils with good learning opportunities. Requirements of the National Curriculum are being met.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

### **Strengths**

- Pupils' results in GCSE examinations are above average.
- The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Good teaching makes effective use of teachers' own geographical skills.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and their good attitudes to their studies make learning effective.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The marking and assessment of pupils' work are weak, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The planning and teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy are inconsistent.
- The use of ICT is insufficiently used to enhance learning in geography.

167. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. This is because teaching is good and the pupils are well motivated. As a result, achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11; overall, learning is good.

168. Exercise books are clear and well cared for, indicating good behaviour and a good attitude to the work. As a result they are good tools for revision. By the end of Year 9 pupils have covered all aspects of the National Curriculum in a well-structured way. The majority have developed the ability to explain geographical processes in relation to relief rainfall and coastal erosion. They are aware of geographical patterns and use this to discuss why population density varies from place to place. They have a well-developed sense of place and make sensible comparisons between the northern and southern regions in Italy. Their basic geographical knowledge of locations is satisfactory but many are unable to name and locate basic world features.

169. By the end of Year 11 pupils undertake geographical fieldwork and build on the skills developed earlier in the school. Many of their individual studies are of high quality. Whilst the influence of the teachers is clear most pupils develop the work and have good graphical skills that enable them to analyse the data and reach sensible conclusions. The lower-attaining pupils are less well organised and their

conclusions are more limited and descriptive. The higher-attaining pupils have a thorough understanding of the effects of flooding. Their background knowledge of Europe is limited but this is being developed by appropriate use of atlases and the provision of case study material.

170. Results in geography are well above the national average. In 2001, three quarters of the pupils achieved grades A\* to C. This was an improvement on the previous year's results which were also well above average. All the pupils entered for GCSE achieved a grade. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to A is also very high. Since the previous inspection the results in GCSE have risen considerably. At the end of Year 9, the results of teacher assessments show that pupils are above the national average.

171. The majority of pupils, in Years 7 to 11, have above average levels of literacy and many produce well-structured work that is accurate and correctly spelt. There are few opportunities for them to extend these skills by using a wide range of written material or by writing at length and in a variety of styles. As a result pupils' good learning and standards in geography are not always expressed in written form. Teachers expect pupils to use the correct terminology and they display important words in classrooms but there are insufficient strategies to develop a wider range of writing by pupils, especially the higher-attaining pupils. Throughout all years good use is made of the pupils' numeracy skills. There are many examples of well-drawn graphs and the development of statistical techniques. The exercise on the perception of distance in Year 7 is particularly useful. Many pupils make good use of ICT, especially in their assignments. However, the department is not extending their skills and their level of attainment is still low in ICT. A lesson on birth-rate and death-rate graphs highlighted the limited ICT skills of pupils and staff.

172. The achievement of pupils is good and in the GCSE work it is very good. Pupils arrive at Rossett School with a wide variety of geographical experiences and their basic knowledge and understanding is often poor. The early introduction to geography in Year 7 is very traditional. It is helpful, but taught in isolation it does not make sufficient demands on pupils and is unrelated to the rest of their work. In the GCSE work the quality of the teaching ensures that all pupils make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress even though there is little in-class support. The achievement of all pupils is a reflection of their very good behaviour and good attitudes to the subject. This is a result of teachers working hard to establish clear procedures of class management.

173. Despite some areas for improvement, overall, teaching and learning are good. The best lessons start with a clear outline of what pupils are expected to learn, are well structured and conclude with a thorough check of learning. This practice is not consistent across the department. A minority of lessons do not move quickly enough or make sufficient demands on pupils to develop their thinking skills. The specialist geography teachers know their subject well and they explain concepts clearly. However, only a limited range of teaching styles is employed in some lessons. Marking is regular but often does not contribute to the learning experience of pupils because of the lack of any information on attainment or how to improve. The departmental grading system is not very helpful and is only related to each

individual class. The marking of assignments is better and uses a ranking system to grade pupils. There is no reference to the National Curriculum levels until Year 9 and staff do not use the descriptions given in the National Curriculum when describing standards achieved by pupils. This makes planning less sharply focused and pupils are not sure about their own learning. The results of assessments are not used to aid curricular planning. These examples represent significant areas that prevent teaching and learning being judged to be very good.

174. The main improvement since the previous inspection has been in GCSE results. The provision for the subject is good overall, as is teaching and learning. These are positive improvements since the previous inspection. Overall the leadership of the department is satisfactory but there is insufficient attention to encourage consistency of teaching and learning across the department. There is an abundance of assessment data but its use is still at an early stage and is not used to develop clear learning targets for all pupils.

## **HISTORY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and has high expectations of pupils; teaching is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking is well used to help pupils improve and their progress is well monitored.
- Relationships are good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Index, library, texts and documents to develop research skills are underused.
- Competence in reading is not always sufficient to detect and identify bias in evidence.

175. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 they are well above. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 is good. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is very good. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they show a sound competence in the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, although their reading sometimes lacks an analytical perspective. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

176. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have been well above average for A\* to C and A\* to G grades in 2000 and 2001. The history department achieved the school's best performance in GCSE examinations in 2001. The proportion of pupils who succeeded above expectations is high.

177. The standard of learning and teaching is a strength of the department. There is a clarity of purpose in each lesson. The aims are worthwhile and appropriate for the pupils including those with special needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of

history. The content is structured, sequenced and appropriate for all pupils, including those with and without special needs. The explanations given are clear. The examples, illustrations and tasks presented to pupils are valid for the underlying concepts of the content and for the key skills to be learnt by pupils. The methods used for drawing out ideas and views of pupils are skilfully applied in both verbal and non-verbal approaches. They are appropriate for the development and progression of learning, including that of pupils with special educational needs. The responses given to pupils' work and ideas are encouraging. The majority of lessons are characterised by an appropriate range of learning activities which are carefully planned, relevant, challenging and provided a sense of progression and achievement. Pupils are expected to participate in lessons. The pace of teaching is suited to the specific group, type of activity and subject content. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT and most cross-reference information using databases. Pupils develop skills in organising, analysing and synthesising information, as in a Year 7 class on Norman England. The accurate evaluation of evidence for validity, wider reading and the use of the library for information are areas for improvement. Sufficient and appropriate new skills and knowledge are introduced at a pace which is both manageable and interesting for most pupils. A Year 8 class fitted the Plague into timelines on their own. Pupils show a keenness to know more about history. They are, by Year 9, showing good powers of imagination and creativity. A few pupils are over-dependent upon their teacher; this was illustrated by a Year 10 group, working on the Weimar Republic, who had to be carefully supervised to complete their work. By Year 11, significant skills of problem-solving have been acquired. A good amount of homework is set and appropriately marked. Annotations are helpful to pupils.

178. History is well organised to provide a balanced and varied sequence of work for the pupils from years 7 to 11. Pupils are helpfully grouped for learning, with consideration given to their individual differences and needs. Management and control are unobtrusive but appropriate monitoring of all pupils' work takes place to ensure the positive engagement of them all in their learning. A due variety of assessment procedures is used. Feedback is given to promote further learning and enjoyment.

179. Since the previous inspection good improvement has been made. Sufficient and appropriate new knowledge and skills are introduced at a pace which is both manageable and interesting for pupils. Sufficient and appropriate changes of activity encourage and reinforce learning for all pupils. Good use is made of time and resources.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- The ICT teachers know their subject and expect pupils to work hard in lessons.
- Very good management of pupils secures very good attitudes and good standards of behaviour.

- Access to good computers and equipment throughout the school is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient monitoring of cross-curricular ICT to ensure all pupils receive their entitlement in the subject in Years 8, 9 and 11.
- The content and marking of tests at the end of Year 9 is insufficient to ensure accuracy of the final assessment.
- Insufficient information is given to pupils about grades in Years 7 to 9 to ensure their targets are reached
- ICT is not used in some subjects to support learning; therefore statutory requirements are not met.

180. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average at the end of Year 7, but below average by the end of Year 9. These standards are attained because pupils enter the school with below average skills and knowledge but achieve well during Year 7 as a result of good teaching of this year group. The standards gained during Year 7 are not maintained as there are no formal ICT lessons in Years 8 and 9 and pupils are expected to gain subject skills and knowledge through other subjects. Many pupils have insufficient opportunities in these years to practise or learn new operations. Consequently, achievement has been no better than satisfactory over Years 8 and 9 and standards are below average at the start of Year 10, as pupils have to re-learn the basics before they can make progress in the GCSE course. These deficiencies are the result of statutory requirements not being met in some subjects. The overall judgement of satisfactory provision is only valid when applied to the good practice seen in Years 7 and 11 and in those subjects that do use ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

181. As pupils begin school in Year 7, their skills in ICT are very varied as they received differing access to computers at their former schools. In general, attainment is below average, even though many pupils have computers at home. Most of them, however, use them for playing games. Pupils know about writing words, calling up pictures and moving robots, but very few know about databases or spreadsheets or drawing freehand on screen. Some pupils have searched the Internet or CD-ROMs to find information and a few pupils have their own home email numbers. During Year 7, pupils learn about logging on to the network and using passwords. The scheme of work ensures pupils learn about word-processing, using databases and spreadsheets, how to present work properly and the basics of control technology. There is no discernible difference in attainment between the girls and the boys, but in lessons, boys are keen to get to the computers quickly and girls are more methodical in their approach, by planning their work before committing it to the screens. General skills are good. Pupils access the programs they need, recall, save and print their work. They control the mouse effectively and understand about menus. Word-processing skills are average. Pupils know about changing the appearance of text, including size, shape and colour and about placing it in different areas of the page. Most pupils call up clip-art pictures to insert graphics into their texts to improve presentation, but none of them know how to manipulate the images other than resizing. By the end of Year 7, pupils attain average standards, which demonstrates good achievement.

182. As some subject teachers do not use computers in lessons, pupils in Years 8 and 9 do not make enough progress in the subject and many forget what they have learned. Those who have home computers make satisfactory progress on some aspects, such as keyboard speed, information finding and sending electronic messages. In 2000, the results of teachers' assessments in ICT from some subjects where tests were given at the end of Year 9 showed that 92 per cent of pupils attained level five and above. This was 30 per cent higher than average, but a narrow range of the subject was assessed. Work seen during the inspection confirms this position as evidence points to average standards in some, but not all, aspects of ICT, and pupils' books in many other subjects do not show evidence of enough work produced using ICT. Pupils are unskilled in data logging, creating their

own art work on screen, using databases, making graphs and some aspects of computer control.

183. Pupils in Year 10 have only recently started a short GCSE course in ICT, and the first group will take the examination in 2002. As most of them had very little ICT during Years 8 and 9, and the subject has developed dramatically during that time, pupils' knowledge and skills are below average. Pupils make good progress in relearning work they have forgotten and on new operations and techniques. Work seen during the inspection shows that word-processing skills, leading to elements of desktop publishing, are average. Pupils build on the knowledge gained earlier in school and develop faster keyboard speed, greater control of the mouse and better understanding of the menus and facilities within programs. Theory work is satisfactory, but a few boys have a misplaced confidence in their practical ability and do not realise the value of theory or homework. Pupils print out their work and file it systematically but they do not understand about annotating it to explain how they arrived at their conclusions. From a low starting point, achievement is good.

184. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. They enter the rooms cheerfully and appear keen to work. Most of them listen attentively, watch demonstrations closely and a few volunteer comments and ask questions indicating higher levels of learning. Pupils settle quickly to practical tasks and show high levels of concentration. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and respect the teachers and the equipment. A few pupils, especially boys, show maturity by helping others and there is mutual cooperation when pupils have to share computers.

185. The quality of teaching and learning in ICT are good when the subject is being specifically taught. In the eight lessons seen during the inspection, there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Four lessons were good, two were very good and one was excellent. Teachers are mainly non-specialists, but have good skills and knowledge. Lesson-planning is thorough and ensures pupils have formal instruction and information, to settle and focus them on the topic. Teachers all give good one-to-one help during practical sessions which gives confidence to the lower-attaining pupils, and speeds up their efforts. By questioning, teachers persuade the higher-attaining pupils to think and produce better work. Because behaviour is good, teachers have no difficulties in class management. Discipline is firm but fair and all pupils are treated equally. Teachers develop the skills of literacy effectively. For example, in one Year 7 lesson, pupils were engaged in editing text, prepared for them by the teacher. Many pupils realised it was a poem, determined the rhyming words, made suitable breaks between the lines and paid good attention to the layout of the page. In one English lesson, pupils with special educational needs used the spell and grammar checkers effectively to spot where they had made mistakes. These pupils make good progress in specific ICT lessons.

186. Leadership is good and there has been satisfactory progress in the subject since the previous inspection. At this school, ICT is not a department, so the coordinator does not see colleagues teaching ICT yet has the unusual task of drawing together teachers from many other subjects to discuss work and make plans. The long term planning is good, to extend ICT to all pupils in Years 10 and 11 and eventually offer the full GCSE course and possibly short-term accreditation. The



problem of ensuring all pupils in Years 8, 9 and 11 receive their entitlement in the subject has yet to be resolved, but the coordinator has improved communication between subjects and assessment practice has improved since the previous inspection. There are new schemes of work for pupils in Year 7 and 10. A programme of staff training has resulted in the improved overall teaching quality and has helped many other teachers to improve their skills and knowledge. The ratio of computers to pupils remains below the national average, so most pupils have to share, which is not satisfactory for those taking GCSE. A part-time technician has been appointed, but the bulk of the work involved with managing the system falls upon the coordinator, which is not the best use of a professional teacher's time. As yet, display in school is poor as there is insufficient pupils' work on show and there are no indications of grading on the work. The curriculum follows the requirements of the National Curriculum, but only for pupils who have formal ICT lessons.

### **Basic skills: the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum**

187. The use of ICT by other departments is variable. Departments such as mathematics, design and technology, music and business education use the computers often for spreadsheets, computer control of equipment, composing tunes, word processing and searching the Internet. Other departments, such as English, history, religious education, modern foreign languages, geography, physical education and art and design, occasionally use computers in lessons, mainly for research and producing texts, but also in the last mentioned subjects, for assessing fitness performances and scanning work. The science department has yet to obtain equipment for data-logging, to teach pupils about monitoring changes over time. Many teachers have received recent training in the use of computers in the classroom, but there are still some teachers who lack confidence in using them with groups of pupils, thus missing opportunities for pupils to practise and further their skills and knowledge. ICT tests are given in English, mathematics, science and design and technology at the end of Year 9. The content, marking and assessment of the tests need further refinement as the grades awarded are far higher than would be expected from pupils who have had only spasmodic ICT for two years. Most other departments are not assessing pupils' work using the recommended guidelines or awarding levels for it, which is in breach of recommendations.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour are an aid to their learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Pupils' listening skills are well developed.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The use of assessment to plan the progress of pupils in lessons is insufficient.

- Opportunities for pupils to use the languages for themselves, independently of the teacher are not sufficiently frequent.
- Teaching methods are insufficiently varied.
- Lesson-planning does not sufficiently build upon pupils' previous learning.

188. Standards achieved by pupils' by the end of Years 9 and 11 in French and German are below national averages. Pupils do not achieve the standards expected in relation to prior attainment because teaching and learning are generally unsatisfactory.

189. Standards achieved in French GCSE examinations in 2000 were below national averages and in German were well below. The majority of pupils achieved below expectations in relation to their prior attainment with the exception of lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs, most of whom gain a grade at GSCE. Pupils achieve better in other subjects than they do in French and German. Girls achieve better than boys in examinations. Pupils' progress in lessons is best when they are given opportunities to practise informally and use the language in realistic situations to gather and give information. The standard of work seen in lessons is below national averages and most pupils make slow progress in increasing their range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. GCSE results in 2001 show there has been some improvement in the proportion of candidates achieving grades A\*-C in German and French. However, the rate of improvement since the previous inspection has been slow.

190. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve standards that are below the national average. Assessments by the department's teachers confirm this. This represents unsatisfactory achievement in relation to prior attainment. Pupils take part in dialogues to buy drinks and snacks, describe their family and buildings in a town in the present tense and express simple opinions. They write for a variety of purposes including letters, short accounts and posters. Writing is usually accurate. The majority of pupils write at some length, but following a model. Listening skills are well developed but speaking and responding skills are not as good. Higher and average attainers identify the main points and specific detail from short texts and short extracts of speech with little need of repetition. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs do so with guidance and some repetition. Pupils beginning Spanish in Year 9 return basic greetings and count in Spanish but are not confident in using the language for themselves in simple exchanges.

191. By the end of Year 11 all pupils increase their range of vocabulary to cover other topics such as describing themselves and others and describing leisure activities in the past but they are not confident in applying grammar rules for themselves to construct their own sentences. They write at length using models but the range of vocabulary and structures are limited and most are dependent upon written notes and glossaries to do this. The majority lack confidence in speaking and responding to questions in German and French without guidance from their teachers.

192. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall in German, French and Spanish. Teaching in half of all lessons observed was at least satisfactory or better and one in six was good or better. However a proportion of one in three lessons seen was unsatisfactory or poor; this statistic, is the criteria that causes the overall judgement of teaching to be unsatisfactory.

193. There are significant strengths in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of German and French, and they usually conduct activities exclusively in the languages being learned. However, in some lessons the language used is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' previous experience and capabilities so that they have difficulty understanding what is going on. Teachers make good use of questioning to enable pupils to respond appropriately and accurately. For example in a Year 8 German class higher-attaining pupils identified the patterns of gender for compound words and applied them for themselves because of the very clear presentation and effective questioning by the teacher.

194. In the more effective lessons teachers make very good use of the board to highlight key words and phrases and to clarify patterns and these act as valuable support for pupils completing tasks.

195. In some lessons, teachers monitor progress closely, intervening where necessary to give support. For example in a Year 11 German lesson, the teacher and German assistant enabled pupils to answer questions in the past tense and, as a result, pupils overcame the difficulties they were having mastering the structure. Similarly in a Year 11 French lesson the teacher and French assistant helped pupils

participate in role-plays about their holidays because they were unsure of key words and phrases.

196. However, in too many lessons, pupils are rarely encouraged to provide extended answers to questioning so that responses are often brief providing insufficient challenge for average and higher-attaining pupils. Presentations are not always clear and activities and resources do not always take sufficient account of their previous learning to enable them to make progress. Pupils are given opportunities to practise new language both as a class and informally in pairs but this is usually restricted to the rehearsal of model dialogues and does not enable pupils to develop independence in the languages. Activities are led by the teacher in the majority of lessons and, although this ensures all pupils understand, it decreases opportunities for pupils to try out the language for themselves and as a result only higher-attaining pupils have the confidence to participate.

197. In many lessons the pace is slow and activities lack variety. Pupils are usually well behaved, listen attentively, concentrate on tasks set and persevere in the face of difficulty. However when activities do not require them to participate or when their needs are not met, some become restless and chatty and lose concentration. For example, in a Year 10 German lesson where a gap-filling exercise about personal descriptions presented on the overhead projector was difficult to read, a large proportion of the class did not attempt to answer questions and the task was completed by the teacher and a very small number of pupils. In listening activities opportunities are missed to enable pupils to predict what they are going to hear and therefore consolidate key words before hearing extracts on tape. Consequently, pupils have difficulty in identifying detail and progress is too slow.

198. Insufficient improvement has been made since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has not improved nor have the standards achieved by pupils by the end of Year 11. Management of the department is unsatisfactory; the monitoring and the development of teaching and learning have not had any significant effect. However, there are signs that standards are beginning to improve in Years 7 to 9. The requirement to teach ICT through the subject is not being met. Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are good but the use of assessment to plan for individual progress through National Curriculum levels of attainment in lessons has not been developed in Years 7 to 9.

## **MUSIC**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are above average and steadily improving further.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- There is excellent leadership and management; the team of teachers works very well together.
- The excellent accommodation and resources, particularly in the field of technology, support pupils' learning.

- There is very good use of assessment strategies at all stages and very good systems for tracking pupils' achievement between Years 7 and 9.

#### Areas for improvement

- In an otherwise excellent space, there are insufficient practice rooms for small group work in improvisation and composition.

199. Overall, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Pupils' achievements in relation to their standards at the start of Years 7 and 10 are good. Pupils' very good attitudes, excellent resources, particularly in the field of technology, excellent leadership of the department and the concerted efforts of all the teachers, also cause the quality of pupils' learning to be very good. Pupils make good progress through the school.

200. Standards seen in Year 7 are average. Pupils in Year 7 sing well, especially the girls. In a lesson they sang their Year Song enthusiastically and with considerable enjoyment, catching the teacher's enthusiasm. They are beginning to compose by using vocal sounds, which they make into a graphic score. In a lesson, their performances of these were good, even though they are not yet conscious of creating a piece of music with shape and structure. By Year 8 however, pupils have developed a good awareness of shape and balance. Using the elements of music many of their compositions consciously have a good structure. In a lesson there were two outstanding examples in which pupils also explored and developed the sounds very sensitively. Pupils used their own instruments such as violin and saxophone as well as percussion, piano and keyboard. The high standards were a result of highly challenging teaching in a previous lesson. The teacher also made good use of compositions, recorded by another form, for listening and evaluation. Understanding of the concepts of shape, rhythm and timbre as a result was well established. Both boys and girls achieve equally well. By Year 9, pupils are composing and performing confidently. A blues composition heard at a lunchtime rehearsal, even though not polished, was assured. In Year 9, pupils also use computers linked to keyboards to create their blues composition. In a Year 9 lesson pupils with special educational needs made similar progress to the others in the class. At the end of the session they had made good progress in understanding the chords, how to represent them on screen and play back using the screen controls. One or two were able to call up a beat for accompaniment. The good progress here was due to the good knowledge of the teacher both of music and of ICT. The teacher's enthusiasm, very clear instructions and demonstration, followed by their practical use of the technology enabled the pupils to learn quickly. The teacher gave good advice to them individually and moved them on well. In this lesson, as in all others seen, pupils behaved very well. They are very well managed by the teachers. Standards in Year 9 overall are above average, and this is borne out by the teacher assessments in 2001, when almost three-quarters of pupils in Year 9 achieved level 5 and above.

201. In Year 10 pupils compose well using keyboards, piano and computers. The standard of work is above average. Most are also confident performers. In one lesson pupils composed music for a Western using a given chord sequence, having

listened to examples of American music such as Copland's 'Rodeo'. Pupils made very good progress in the lesson because teachers knew the pupils' strengths and weaknesses very well and advised them effectively. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Teachers recognise that pupils compose in different ways, some finding the constraints of a chord sequence too restricting. Teachers build pupils' confidence by suggesting alternative ways of working that are equally good. As a result the quality of pupils' learning is very good. There are more girls than boys in this class and both achieved equally well. Standards in Year 11 are above average. In Year 11, pupils continue to use ICT for their composition. In an extra-curricular session after school, four pupils showed they are confident handlers of hardware and software. Music makes a considerable contribution to the development of ICT skills. Moreover, their work shows that they have a good grasp of compositional techniques, always using sound as the criterion. In a lesson on Renaissance and Baroque music, Year 11 pupils showed good knowledge of the period and explained the features of their chosen musical example. Pupils spoke well in the lesson from prepared notes. Standards of literacy in the subject are good and good provision is made for the development of spelling and use of musical words. Pupils also have the opportunity to write evaluations of their work; commentaries on their compositions are written in good extended prose.

202. In the GCSE examination in 2000, two-thirds of pupils achieved a grade between A\* and C and all pupils achieved a grade between A\* and G. In 2001 half the pupils achieved a grade between A\* and C and all pupils achieved a grade within the full range A\* to G, although the small number taking the examination makes comparison with national averages unreliable.

203. There is clear evidence that standards are rising. Pupils come to the school with mixed experiences of music from primary school. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average for the majority of pupils, representing good achievement. In Year 11 standards are also above average with potential for good GCSE results. This also represents good achievement from the average attainment when these particular pupils were in Year 9. The rising standards are due to several factors. The driving force has been the management and leadership of the head of department, which is excellent. The very good team of teachers work with a shared purpose. They exchange their good practice as teachers through regular monitoring and discussion. They have reviewed their schemes of work regularly so that pupils rehearse their musical skills often and their progress is monitored by a very good tracking system. Assessment is regular; it is shared and discussed with the pupils. The teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and pupils enjoy music. For example, there is a growing number opting to do music at GCSE level. There are 20 pupils in the present Year 10 group. At present, 174 pupils are learning an instrument in school. Excellent accommodation and resources also reinforce pupils' learning, although more practice rooms would improve the quality of small group work.

204. Enthusiasm and commitment are also evident in the number of pupils present in the department at lunchtimes and after school. A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available to pupils. Pupils have the opportunity to perform their music both in and out of school at concerts and

productions. There are regular visits to professional concerts and shortly pupils will attend the School Proms in London. The group 'Saxophonix', heard during the inspection, play to a high standard because of very demanding leadership by the head of department, very good musical skills and willingness to work hard on the part of the pupils. Music makes a considerable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and personal development of the pupils. The provision for their cultural development is excellent.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are above average.
- GCSE results are well above average, and have improved significantly.
- Pupils' achievement and progress are good in physical education.
- Excellent, well-balanced curriculum, including outdoor education in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities are available and taken up by boys and girls.

### **Areas for improvement**

- There is sometimes insufficient emphasis placed on planning to meet the full range of pupils' needs.
- National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are not being used as part of assessment.
- Monitoring of teaching quality and learning is not fully implemented.

205. Standards in physical education are above average overall, although average at the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement and progress. Pupils' very positive attitudes and strong learning skills are supported by good teaching which ensures that both boys and girls learn effectively as they move through the school.

206. The formal assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards in physical education are well above the national expectation for both boys and girls. This is not entirely confirmed by inspection findings. In work seen, standards in Years 7-9 are generally average, and by the end of Year 9 a good majority of pupils are reaching expected standards in their activities, including those having special educational needs. Standards in hockey are average, and Year 9 boys perform enthusiastically with secure basic skills, and a developing understanding of the principles of play. Year 9 girls are similarly enthusiastic in netball and have sound technical skills. They show a growing awareness of tactical play, and lower attainers make good progress in improving their marking techniques. Standards in gymnastics are above average in Year 8, where girls of all levels of attainment show good control and body tension as they perform their partner sequences. Their cooperation in both the planning and evaluation of their work is good. Work in Year 7 was disrupted by adverse weather conditions. In the adapted lessons seen, boys and girls showed a very keen interest and enthusiasm for their work – the boys' foundation games skills are above average, whilst the girls show secure basic footwork and passing skills in netball.

207. Results in GCSE physical education have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 2000, all candidates successfully passed, with a well above average 83 per cent gaining the higher A\*-C grades. Boys and girls achieved similar standards, although fewer girls opted for the subject. Achievement was good, and pupils did better in physical education than in almost all their other GCSE subjects. This is also the case with the 2001 results, and the high standards have been maintained with over 80 per cent gaining higher grades, and an overall 100 per cent pass rate.

208. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Boys and girls understand the effects of exercise on the body and prepare themselves properly for their activities. In Year 10 hockey, boys and girls perform skilfully and apply their skills well in strategic play. Higher-attaining girls make very good progress in planning their own practices and applying them to game situations. Year 11 boys are notably successful in developing their cooperation, leadership and decision-making skills during the problem-solving activities which form part of their work in outdoor education. The standards reached by girls in Year 10 dance are well above average; they work together in small groups creating their own sequences and motifs. For those taking the GCSE course, standards are also above average, with notable strength in the theoretical elements of the course. These are well linked to the practical work, and result in well above average levels of knowledge and understanding, as in a successful Year 11 lesson on principles of fitness and training. GCSE pupils in Year 10 show well above average standards in football, whilst girls' work in trampolining is also above average. For boys, however, standards in trampolining are lower than expected. Despite their confidence, their foundation skills are not secure and require considerable consolidation before more advanced work can be safely attempted.

209. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress in lessons. Learning skills are well developed, and pupils are cooperative and very well behaved. The levels of interest and enthusiasm for the



subject are high and participation rates are very good. Pupils' commitment and physical effort are strong, and are complemented by considerable maturity and a willingness to accept responsibility.

210. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes are good throughout the school. Important strengths of teaching are the very good relationships and management of pupils, linked to high expectations of them, which combine to create a cooperative atmosphere for learning in almost all lessons. Teachers have very good knowledge of the activities they teach. As a result, pupils learn correct techniques and improve their knowledge and understanding. For example, in Year 10 football, progress was good in improving pupils' technique and awareness in creating width in attack linked to accurate crosses resulting in shots on goal. In the most effective lessons, teachers frequently question pupils to check on their learning. Where this is also linked to opportunities to take responsibility for planning and organising their work, progress is notably good. In Year 11 outdoor education, where boys were grappling with the challenge presented by the 'spider's web', the gains made in knowledge and understanding were accompanied by tangible improvements in teamwork, cooperation, and self-confidence.

211. Leadership and management are very good. Curricular planning is also very good, and the inclusion of an extensive outdoor education provision in Years 10 and 11 is a major strength in the well balanced opportunities available for boys and girls. National Curriculum requirements are met fully, and the opportunities in Years 10 and 11 for choice and specialisation are well established and have positive impact on participation rates. Assessment procedures are secure, but should be more closely aligned to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. A regular approach to monitoring teaching and learning is needed to ensure consistency, and promote continued improvement by sharing the good range of successful practice that currently exists.

212. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities has been consolidated, and provision for the subject has been recognised with the Sportsmark Gold award. Importantly, teaching and learning are now more consistent, and have resulted in higher standards in examination work, and improved progress and personal development for pupils across the school.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils bring good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Religious education is well led and managed.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Not enough time is allocated to the non-GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.

- Marking and assessment are inconsistent.
- Accommodation is limited.

213. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall. Standards in Years 7 to 9 meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and the standards of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are following the GCSE course are at the national average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are satisfactory. Also the achievements of pupils on the GCSE course are satisfactory in relation to their standards at the start of Year 10. The standards of those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are not following the GCSE course are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is because for these pupils religious studies are taught as part of the personal and social education course and not enough time is allocated. Although they achieve well in the topics they cover, their overall achievements are unsatisfactory because of the lack of time. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour contribute to the good quality of learning in lessons.

214. In Years 7 to 9 pupils attain the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They know the basic beliefs of the major religions of the world. They know about various themes which are common to most religions. For example, they know the importance of symbolism and consequently understand why Muslims wash before prayer. They know why people with religious beliefs pray and are aware of the importance in some religions of the pilgrimage. Good work was seen on the Hajj and on Christian pilgrimages to Lourdes. Pupils know about passages of rite such as marriage ceremonies and the bar mitzvah. Although in Year 7 much of the work is concerned with factual information, there is an increasing emphasis on pupils applying ideas to their own lives. For example, in Year 9 pupils are asked to think about their own behaviour and what they would change about themselves.

215. In Years 10 and 11 pupils on the GCSE course attain average national standards. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C rose slowly over the three years leading to 2000 when they were still well below the national average. In 2001 there was a big improvement and the proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C increased markedly. However, all trends over time and comparisons with national averages have to be treated with caution because of the small numbers involved. Pupils' coursework contains interesting studies of local places of Christian worship and moral issues such as capital punishment and euthanasia. Studies on the statement: "You can be Christian without going to church" show that most pupils are beginning to understand how to think about moral concepts. Pupils consider human rights and world hunger from the viewpoint of man's stewardship of the world's resources. The higher-attaining pupils show perception in dealing with these issues and even apply first principles to their arguments. The lower attainers, however, have to cover the same work and struggle to show much insight.

216. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow the GCSE course attain standards below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In a Year 10 lesson led by guest speakers from "Youth for Christ", pupils showed a range of sophistication in considering the morality of euthanasia and abortion. Whereas some did not really know how to marshal an argument, others had the sophistication to base their opinions on moral principles. However, not enough time is allocated to religious studies for these pupils and consequently they do not cover enough of the agreed syllabus. Therefore, although they learn well in individual lessons, their overall achievement is unsatisfactory.

217. The quality of teaching and learning is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and some of the teaching is very good. This shows an improvement on the previous inspection. Nearly all religious studies lessons are taught by specialist teachers who have very good subject knowledge. This has only been the case in this school year and goes some way to explaining why pupils' achievements in the lessons seen were higher than their overall achievement in the past. Teaching in the few lessons taught by non-specialists in Years 7 to 9 is also good. They are helped by the detailed lesson plans provided by the head of department. The department makes a good contribution to the teaching of literacy and oracy. Pupils in all years are given plenty of opportunity for discussion as when a Year 7 class was seen in small groups sensibly considering people's need for rules. In Years 10 and 11 much

of the work revolves around discussion. In the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, pupils do plenty of extended writing although low attainers are not given sufficient help and their answers are often bland. In Years 7 to 9 written work is often confined to questions requiring short answers although higher attainers are given work that enables them to express their own opinions in some depth.

218. The planning of lessons is good. In the best lessons planning incorporates imaginative methods and very good use of resources. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson in which pupils became engrossed by the teacher's demonstration of the ritual use of the prayer mat by Muslims. The teacher's very good knowledge of his subject allowed him to deal with a variety of questions. He then set the class written work which required them to give factual information about Islam. The homework, based on the Muslim proverb that "prayer is better than sleep", required them to reflect on the lesson, thus extending their learning. This quality of lesson leads to the good attitudes that pupils have about religious studies. Teachers' very good management skills lead to good behaviour by pupils. In all years pupils move around the room for group work with minimum disruption. When talking in groups they remain on task, often helped by the strict imposition of time limits.

219. Teachers ensure that pupils make a satisfactory amount of use of computers for word-processing and research, although this is not as noticeable among younger pupils as it is on the GCSE course. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress although the targets specific to religious studies on the individual education plans are often too vague. In Years 8 and 9 classes are set according to ability and teachers ensure that the work is at a suitable level of difficulty. In Year 7 classes are of mixed ability but teachers set some work that can be attempted by pupils with moderate learning difficulties. They then set extension work in order to challenge the higher attainers. In the GCSE course, however, some pupils cannot cope with the level of work given.

220. The weakest part of teaching in religious studies is the way work is marked. Although no work is left unmarked, teachers' comments rarely show pupils what they need to do to improve. This situation is not helped by the fact that there are no clear descriptions provided of expected levels. Consequently there are no clear targets for pupils or criteria against which teachers can measure progress.

221. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a very clear idea of the way in which the department should develop based on a coherent philosophy. The subject development plan sets suitable priorities for achieving these aims. The detailed schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are particularly helpful to non-specialist teachers although the schemes for older classes, while adequate, are not of the same high quality. New members of the department are welcomed and given all necessary assistance. There are good links with local churches so that a good programme of outside speakers is organised. These links, however, do not extend to other faiths than Christian. The department contributes very strongly to the school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also contributes well to assemblies. Resources are only just satisfactory, although there are some good artefacts. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory. The main teaching room presents a suitable environment but religious studies are also taught in a dilapidated temporary building which hinders both teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection teaching has improved but standards overall are still at the same satisfactory level and most pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve unsatisfactorily because of curricular inadequacies. Therefore overall improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.



## BUSINESS STUDIES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Good use is made of records of achievement and profiling.
- The school has purposeful links with the community.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of learning experiences.

### Areas for improvement

- None.

222. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved as a result of very good teaching. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards at the start of Year 10 are well above average. Their attitudes are very good and have a positive impact upon their learning.

223. Results in examinations are well above average. The GCSE Business Studies course attains a good A\* to C pass rate, above the national average. The 2001 results are just below average. There has been a fall in the top A\* to B grades. The A\* to G grades are above average. The overall pass rate exceeded the target for the year.

224. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good, resulting in good learning. The strengths are teachers' knowledge and their professional commercial and service understanding of the way the subject should be presented. Teachers have a technical competency in teaching basic skills. Lessons are planned effectively and teachers set clear learning objectives for all levels of attainment. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills. They develop ideas and increase their understanding of the world of work. The rate of achievement over time is good. Pupils make confident, thoughtful use of primary and secondary sources. Boys and girls communicate in appropriate depth and in a variety of methods. Teachers enhance pupils' skills and knowledge to address questions purposefully and develop independent, reasoned argument through discussion, independent reading, extended writing and use of electronic data sources.

225. Leadership and management are good. This area of provision has clearly stated, realistic and appropriate aims. The aims are relevant to their stated purpose. Contacts with local unit or firms are very good.

226. There has been good improvement made since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is having a clear and positive effect upon pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. When learning difficulties are encountered teachers know when and how to intervene to extend pupils' understanding.

## WORK EXPERIENCE AND WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Overall provision for work-related learning is very good.

### Strengths

- The socially inclusive curriculum means equality of opportunity for all students.
- Work experience brings relevance to the study of school subjects.
- The quality of work placements is very good.
- The opportunities to practise skills such as team work are good.

### Areas for improvement

- None.

227. Work experience brings relevance to the study of school subjects. The programme sets and achieves high standards. There is a work experience database live on the school network. The quality of the programme rests in the successful preparation for pupils to act and think for themselves, with a good set of personal skills to meet the work demands of adult life. Pupils acquire personal and specifically vocational skills in relation to the world of work. For pupils in Year 10 and those following vocational education courses are provided with appropriate training by local business partners and employers. The teachers involved are highly skilled in securing good firms to participate in the programme.

228. The provision of work-related learning and the standard of its teaching are very good. Pupils make good progress in lessons. The Years 10 and 11 vocational curriculum is a success. In Year 11 pupils take the Diploma of Vocational Education Foundation Level. In 2000, 16 pupils were examined and 14 achieved a full diploma. These results were the best ever achieved by the school. Pupils in Year 10 follow the work-related learning course that consists of real challenges towards the ASDAN qualification. This Year 10 course is successful in that pupils fully participate in work experience, community service and outdoor pursuits. This course allows for success at different levels. It is attracting large numbers and a wide range of abilities. The teaching is very good and supported by assistants who help to consolidate learning. Pupils succeed in gaining practical vocational skills and enjoy a curriculum relevant to the world of work. Key Skills are integrated into the programmes. Year 11 pupils have gained The Essential Food Hygiene Certificate and are taking an accredited course in ICT. These are good qualifications for these pupils.



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

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

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

### *GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	3	100	53	0	6	1.00	0.97
French	1	100	78	0	17	1.00	1.81
German	1	100	83	0	18	2.00	1.95
Mathematics	1	100	63	0	17	1.00	1.56
Other sciences	2	100	74	50	24	3.50	2.00
Physics	1	0	53	0	8	0.00	1.08
Post 16 VQ Business	8	-	-	-	-	11.25	10.78
Post 16 VQ Health & Social Care	6	-	-	-	-	16.00	10.69
Post 16 VQ Leisure & Tourism	6	-	-	-	-	14.00	10.54

*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	14	71		50		5.8	
Biology	14	100		36		6.4	
Chemistry	11	91		27		4.9	
Physics	8	100		25		4.5	
Design and technology	4	100		25		5.0	
Business studies	10	90		20			
Business GNVQ Advanced	21	100		24		6.5	
Physical education	7	100		43		6.3	
Art and design	4	100		50		7.5	
Music	4	100		50		8.0	
Geography	9	89		22		5.1	
History	7	100		29		4.8	
Sociology	7	100		14		5.7	
Psychology	7	100		57		8.0	
English language	10	100		30		5.4	
English literature	19	100		32		6.1	
French	1	100		0		2.4	
German	5	80		0		2.4	
General studies	32	97		50		6.5	

*Intermediate vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	12	83		17			
Leisure and tourism	5	100		0			

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics: The inspection covered the three advanced level courses offered by the school: mathematics with mechanics, mathematics with statistics and further mathematics. In further mathematics students achieve well, given their GCSE results in mathematics. In addition, some students took a GCSE re-sit course if they did not achieve a grade C in Year 11. This course was also inspected. The teaching of the application of number to all students who do not take advanced mathematics is compulsory.

Sciences: The focus was on biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled. In chemistry, A-level results have been below average for the last two years. The results improved slightly in 2001 and most students did as well as expected, considering their GCSE results. Two chemistry lessons were observed and teaching in those lessons was good. Students have not gained as good results in recent examinations as might be expected from the sample of lessons seen during the inspection. In 2000, results in the later modules of the A level course were significantly lower than those in earlier modules. In the 2001 AS examinations, there were weaknesses in timing the course and one of the later topics had to be rushed.

#### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured and the expectations of teachers are high.
- Marking is thorough and it helps students to improve their standards.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge helps them to question students well and explain new topics clearly.
- The excellent attitudes to learning of students underpin their good achievement.
- The subject is very well led and managed and good curricular planning ensures good progression in learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCE Advanced level are not as high as they could be.

229. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good and sometimes very good. The excellent attitudes shown by students and the quality of marking and assessment also cause the quality of learning to be good. As a result, students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is good.

230. The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students. The 2000 GCE A-level examination results were below average. This represented satisfactory achievement, given the average standards of students when they started the course. Male and female students did equally well. In relation to their GCSE results, they did as well as expected. A few students with modest GCSE results did very well. Results in 2001 showed an improvement. Achievement for these students is good. The results in the 2001 AS examinations were good with nearly half of the students achieving a grade A or B. All but two out of 22 students achieved a pass grade. There is improvement, therefore, from the previous year although given the above average standards being achieved by end of Year 11, there is room for further improvement in the sixth form.

231. The standards of work of seen in lessons by current students are broadly average. Male and female students do equally well. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are achieving much as expected. They show good knowledge and understanding of the use of Venn diagrams to calculate probabilities in the AS statistics course and can calculate velocities accurately from displacement – time graphs. Students are successfully building upon their GCSE work in new topics. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. All have successfully completed the AS modules nearly half with grade A. Students on all courses have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when they are introduced to a new topic – for example in one lesson, students drew well on their knowledge and understanding of calculus to find rates of change of surface areas. In the lessons seen they were doing well as a result of their excellent attitudes and effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Most students can recall knowledge and apply it well to their written work. Students re-sitting their GCSE mathematics course in the sixth form often find the work difficult and achieve below average grades. Despite this, they work hard and try their best to succeed.

232. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Students learn well on the AS and A2 courses because the teaching is good. It is carefully planned and lessons always have clear aims. Teachers structure lessons well, keep up a good pace and provide appropriate levels of challenge and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show a very good knowledge of mathematics in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. As a result students are highly motivated and work hard. Students make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing. The marking of student's work is very good. It usually contains detailed comments to help students see how they can improve.

233. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being very well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Much of the consistency of approach to mathematics comes about because of the positive way in which teachers work with each other. They are enthusiastic and committed to bringing about continuing improvement. The scheme of work is very well planned and effectively reflects the

subject requirements, and sets the stage for good teaching. It identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning.

### **Application of number in the sixth form**

234. Standards of numeracy in the sixth form are above average. All students who do not take advanced mathematics in the sixth form must take a lesson in this key skill; many take the examination and achieve level 3.

235. In most subjects students cope well with the mathematical demands required. For example, in geography and psychology, students can use confidently a range of statistical techniques to analyse data. In physics, students measure with accuracy and understand the importance of errors in calculations. Graphs are usually drawn confidently and accurately. Teachers provide sufficient opportunity to practise calculations although sometimes students do not present calculations as carefully as they should. In GNVQ leisure and recreation, students had difficulty with the calculations involved in fitness testing.

### **Biology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- A-level biology results were well above average in 2000 and similar in 2001.
- Teaching is enthusiastic, interesting and very effective.
- Students maintain very good levels of concentration in class, work hard on homework questions and coursework and, overall, achieve very well.
- Students' notes are of high quality and provide an excellent basis for further study and revision.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The department does not make enough use of ICT to broaden the range of learning activities.

236. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average for students following A and AS level biology courses. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good and students appreciate and take full advantage of the teaching they receive. Students achieve very well in sixth form biology. They gain much better A-level results than might be expected, given their GCSE results at the end of Year 11.

237. The standards of students' work in the current Years 12 and 13 generally reflect the recent A-level examination results. Students have a secure knowledge and understanding of recent topics. Some students produce coursework of a very high standard, combining thorough investigation into, for example, the effect of light intensity on the behaviour of blowfly larvae, with immaculate presentation of the findings.

238. Students in Year 12 are only in the early stages of their course but are already achieving better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. They have adjusted quickly to the more detailed understanding, for example of the stages in cell division, that is required in the AS syllabus compared with the GCSE course.

239. Teaching and learning in biology are very good. The two teachers involved have quite different teaching styles and the variety of approach that they provide is highly valued by students both in terms of maintaining interest and in presenting explanations in different ways. Teaching in some lessons is quietly enthusiastic and very informative, with carefully chosen resources including transparencies, textbooks and moulding material for modelling. In other lessons there is an emphasis on questioning to ensure that students have fully understood the ideas. For example, in a lesson on the parts of the kidney, the teacher explained how the various functions are achieved and reinforced the explanation while labelling a diagram. Students were constantly being questioned and needed to listen intently throughout. At the end of the lesson, when challenged individually to describe the processes involved, they proved that they had remembered and understood the details.

240. There are also important aspects of the teaching that are common to all lessons. Teachers are very knowledgeable and keen to share with students their obvious enjoyment of the subject. They start from the assumption that students will work hard and achieve highly; they expect written work to be very carefully presented. Students strive to meet these expectations and usually do so. An important part of all lessons is the careful, concise notes that students make. These notes give students a secure source of information from which to do further, more demanding work for themselves.

241. Teaching and learning in individual lessons are generally good and occasionally very good. However, it is clear from looking at students' files, that there is a very high level of consistency in the quality of teaching that students receive over their two years in the sixth form. Students' work is very carefully marked so that they are left in no doubt what they need to do to improve. This consistency and attention to detail means that students experience very good quality teaching overall and learn very quickly.

242. Teachers provide students with very good opportunities to develop the key skills of literacy and numeracy. There is good emphasis on using exactly the right words when answering questions or giving explanations. Students have good opportunities for using numeracy skills in calculations, notably those involved in investigations, and in drawing graphs. They are given information about useful internet sources in order to speed up their research into various topics. Nevertheless, ICT is not used as much as it should be to develop students' skills and to provide a wider range of learning activities. Until now there have been difficulties in gaining access to suitable equipment but several new computers have recently been acquired by the science department.

243. The subject is very well managed, largely because of the close cooperation, and shared commitment to high standards, of the two teachers involved in the A and AS level courses. Curricular planning is very good.

244. A-level results in 2000 were well above the national average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and over half gained grades A and B. Examination results vary from year to year: they were average in 1998 and well below average in 1999. However, the improvement in 2000 was maintained in 2001. On average over the last three years, biology has been one of the most successful A-level subjects in the school.

245. It is not possible to judge the progress in sixth form biology since the previous inspection. In the previous report, the three A level sciences were considered together so that there were no judgements relating to the individual subjects.

## **Physics**

Overall, the quality of provision in Physics is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- Students have secure understanding of basic principles.
- Students' investigative coursework is of good quality.
- Teachers provide valuable projects within which students can develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Students do not all have an accurate and complete written record of the work they have covered.

- Teachers do not always ensure that all students are listening when important ideas are being explained.
- The subject does not make enough use of ICT, particularly data-logging techniques.

246. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is sound. Students achieve satisfactorily in sixth-form physics. They gain anticipated A-level results, given their GCSE results at the end of Year 11.



247. The standards of students' work in the current Year 12 and 13 reflect the recent A-level examination results and are broadly average for students following A and AS level courses. Students have a secure understanding of basic principles. Higher attainers have appropriately detailed knowledge and can apply their understanding successfully in written answers and when solving numerical problems. Lower attainers often do not take sufficient care in presenting their calculations; they make errors and sometimes neglect to give units for their answers. For students of all levels of attainment, the quality of their practical and investigative work is at least good and often better than their attainment in theoretical aspects of the course.

248. In the early stages of the AS course in Year 12, the strengths and weaknesses of students' attainment already follow the pattern of those of students in Year 13. Year 12 students are successful in building a circuit to find the electromotive force and internal resistance of a cell; they plot graphs carefully and understand how they will use them. However, there are some weaknesses in their recall of precisely what is meant by the electromotive force.

249. Teaching and learning in physics are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan activities appropriately. In some individual lessons, teaching is good: explanations are given clearly, students are rigorously questioned to ensure that they have understood and they then move on to associated practical work. In most lessons students work conscientiously on the tasks they have been given and make steady progress. However, in some lessons, the teacher's explanations lack sufficient emphasis on the most important points and, under these circumstances, some students lose concentration later in the lesson and do not listen as well as they should. The arrangements for taking notes in these lessons are inadequate and are a matter of concern for some students. The plan is that students will take outline notes in the lesson and re-write them, using the textbook, after the lesson. This works well for higher attaining students who do compile an accurate record of what needs to be remembered. Lower attainers, however, find this more difficult: their notes from the lesson vary widely and important ideas are omitted by some students. Occasionally, a student decides to complete the finished set of notes during the lesson and 'switches off' from the remainder of the lesson in order to do so. The result is that students do not always absorb and record the details that they need and their learning, although broadly satisfactory, is not as secure as it could be.

250. The subject provides some valuable opportunities for students to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. For example, a project on the discovery of the nucleus allows students to work independently on an important physics topic while practising their skills in deriving information from, among other sources, the Internet. They then word-process their findings. Students also make good progress in developing numeracy and literacy skills when analysing their results and presenting investigative coursework. However, there are few other applications of information and communication technology within the A and AS level physics courses. In particular, there is not enough use of sensors and associated data-logging equipment. The department has found it difficult to gain access to suitable computers in the past but new equipment has recently been purchased.

251. The subject is satisfactorily managed. There is appropriate curricular planning to ensure that courses run smoothly. There is some monitoring of teaching but the action taken as a result of that monitoring is not yet sufficient to overcome the weaknesses in teaching and learning and ensure that students achieve the best possible standards.

252. The A-level results in physics in 2000 broadly matched the national average. Almost all students gained a pass grade and a third, slightly below the national average, gained the higher grades A and B. On average over the last three years, students gained similar A-level results in physics to the average across all subjects in the school. Examination results vary from year to year: they were below average in 1998 and above average in 1999. In 2001, although all students gained a grade A to E, the overall results were below the national average and not quite as good as those for 2000. The success rate in the 2001 A/S examinations was better than the provisional national average. The variation in results from year to year follows a similar pattern to the variation in GCSE attainment of the students in each group.

253. It is not possible to make a judgement on the progress made in physics since the previous inspection. At that time, all three A-level science subjects were inspected together and there are no references to the individual subjects in the report.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The school offers one course in this curricular area: design and technology product design. It was inspected as a focus subject.

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- There has been a marked improvement in examination results at GCE over time.
- Students have a very good grasp of design concepts and apply them well in both class and portfolio work.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent: lessons are very well structured with a range of activities that effectively help students extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Students have excellent motivation and work productively.
- The links to industry and the challenges set by entry into industrial competitions are supporting students' learning.
- The subject is very well led. There is very good cooperative planning by teachers.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- A minority of students do not experience a sufficiently wide application of ICT.

254. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. A significant proportion is excellent. Students' good attitudes, their willingness to participate in discussion and their very positive motivation also causes the quality of the learning in design and technology product design to be very good. The change of GCE course, including the high quality of curricular planning by teachers for its introduction and teaching, makes a significant impact on the quality of learning. As a result, students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is very good.

255. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing very well as a result of the very effective teaching. The quality of interaction between teachers and students has a significant effect on student achievement and learning. In Year 13 students are skilful in drawing on and reflecting upon their previous experiences in Years 10 and 11 to write very well focused specifications for major projects. The detailed planning carried out by teachers which includes a good range of focused industrial visits, enhances the quality of learning for the students as they gain insights into product design.

256. The very effective teaching of key skills is a prominent feature in all work. Students are more than competent in communicating design ideas. Year 12 students as part of the mini project on digital radios for instance, have to make a presentation using 'power point' software. In one lesson a student confidently reviewed the materials on the computer checking all aspects to ensure that it met all relevant criteria. Students cope well with researching information from a range of materials to trigger design ideas. In one lesson, students show their good understanding of period design. This is reflected in portfolios of higher-attaining students who have great skill in analysing their research.

257. In talking to students they consider carefully the balance between the aesthetic and technological aspects of product design. Achievement is very good. Although students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, they are achieving well. Students learn very well. They work productively and respond well to the different learning styles that they experience. A Year 12 group rose to the challenge of realising design ideas according to the characteristics of the chosen materials. They worked until the very last minute of the lesson examining and thinking about what they wanted to do. They show good knowledge and understanding of the design and make processes. They have high levels of skill in drawing and sketching. The production of annotated drawings and working drawings is very good. Numeracy skills are excellent. Photographic evidence, along with the analysis of portfolios of mini and major projects in Years 12 and 13 clearly shows work of high quality. The technical language of product design is of a high order. Teachers have very high expectations of students and their use of language. Students respond positively. They have very good oral skills. In one lesson after a hesitant start students spoke confidently about creativity and innovation as part of planning their major projects.

258. Male and female students are achieving very good standards. Talking to students in Year 13, they see the progress they have made from Year 12 in GCE AS work to the depth and breadth of understanding they have achieved in Year 13 in GCE A2. This is exemplified in the depth and quality of research and analysis in portfolios.

259. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have very good skills which enable them to work independently. On reflection they consider that they have made progress in Year 12 from the earlier Years 10 and 11. They consider that the organisation and planning of their time and working to deadlines are now much more effective. Analysis of the mini and major projects shows well structured development of ideas through the design process. Extensive research and analysis as well as considerable time spent independently on very good presentation of content is clearly evident. A good proportion of students make very good use of ICT, although for a few this is not as strong an element.

260. In GCE advanced design and technology, examination results were below average in 2000, and average in 2001. However these statistics are based on a very small entry figure. Students did well considering their GCSE results. A new advanced course, design and technology: product design is now in place. Examination results in 2000 in product design at A/S level were well above average.

261. In the sixth form, in design and technology teaching is of a very high order. Three-quarters of teaching is very good the remainder is excellent. Students gain many benefits from the high levels of knowledge that teachers have and their ability to know when to intervene in learning. The very close planning between teachers matched to students particular needs and the consistently very good marking of work for improvement has a considerable impact on the progress that all students are making in both year groups. Four lessons were observed. All were at least very good. In one, excellent teaching included particularly good discussion of design ideas with specific reference to materials and construction. This led to students gaining a very good understanding of the possibilities and limitations of materials.

262. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. The very good management by the recently appointed subject leader has had a significant impact on the standards now being achieved in the sixth form. There is a very clear vision of what has to be done to further improve standards. The change of course at this level has had a major impact on the raising of standards and GCE examination results. Joint planning for the course by the teachers also makes a significant contribution to the improvements taking place in learning. There is a substantial increase in numbers of students now studying design and technology. Similarly the very recent change in a focus area course at GCSE in product design will further enhance success. The faculty's links to industry and the challenges set students by entry into industrial competitions further enhances the range and quality of learning experiences for all.

## **BUSINESS**

263. The business courses include AS and A2 in business studies, AVCE business and GNVQ intermediate business. In 2000 the A level results were above average. Course numbers are increasing and the 2001 AS and A-level results, not yet validated, are likely to be average. Male and female students perform at much the same levels.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

264. This was not a focus subject and only one lesson was sampled. AS and A2 courses in ICT have been introduced this year. Standards at the start of Year 12 are below average because most students have had very little formal ICT in school since Year 7 and are struggling to catch up with developments.

265. Some students doing other sixth-form courses use computers effectively. For example, they show good skill in manipulating scanned images in art and design, and good use of word-processing in GNVQ courses such as business and leisure and tourism.

266. Students working in private study time demonstrate competence in using the available equipment.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education but leisure and recreation, travel and tourism and GNVQ leisure and tourism were sampled.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- The students achieve well and examination results are improving.
- The course is attracting increasing numbers of students who bring a strong commitment leading to good progress being made in lessons.
- The physical education department is well led; good teaching and above average standards are achieved,

#### Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient activity in contemporary studies at AS level.
- Marking is not always helpful to students.
- The department lacks a dedicated base for the theoretical elements of examination work.

267. Standards of work seen in the sixth form in physical education are above average. This is in response to good teaching and the positive attitudes of students to the subject. The quality of learning, therefore, and students' achievement in relation to their attainment in GCSE examinations, are good.

268. Since the previous inspection, one of the school's positive improvements has been to successfully introduce physical education as an examination subject in the sixth form. Initial results in 2000 were average, with eight of the nine students completing the course successfully, including one gaining the highest grade A. The most recent results in 2001 were significantly better – all eight students gained a pass, with an above average proportion of A and B grades. When compared with their GCSE starting points, all students gained higher results than expected, and their achievement in physical education was very good. Also in 2001, all 21 students who entered for AS level successfully completed the course, with around a quarter gaining the higher grades. Given their GCSE results, more than half did better than expected, and the results in AS level physical education represent good achievement. This positive picture of student achievement and success is very creditable, given the relatively modest GCSE results of some who opt for the course. The AS and A2 courses are growing in popularity. The proportion of female students has been low, but this is now increasing.

269. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are above average. Students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject's principles. Particularly where work is linked with associated practical performance. This was well illustrated in a successful Year 12 lesson where students were investigating the relationship between muscle size and physical

performance. In all lessons seen, the well-planned lesson structures and activities focussed purposefully on developing students' knowledge and understanding. Good gains were made when they drew on their own experiences, for example in a Year 13 lesson on the psychology of performance, when reviewing differences between the motivational factors influencing performers in team and individual sports.

270. Teaching is good overall, and ensures that students learn effectively. Teachers have a growing awareness of the demands of the course, and use their good subject knowledge to promote students' understanding. Expectations of response are high, and relationships are very good. The on-going drive to establish links between the theoretical and practical elements of the work is a key feature of the successful teaching and learning. Students are both intellectually challenged by the work, and supported well in their areas of uncertainty. They are confident, work hard, and cooperate well in groups. Their motivation and commitment to their work can be seen most clearly in the very high quality of their personal project studies. The high standard reflects also their good capacity for independent research, and their ability to use both ICT and other media to research and extract information and develop their own notes. This is generally consistent across the course, although work in contemporary studies in physical education is a weakness in Year 12. The regular use of homework supports standards well. Marking is regular, but could be more helpful with stronger guidance showing how students could improve their work.

271. The subject is well led and managed, with a clear focus on improving provision in the sixth form. Resources are generally good, and the department is developing the use of new technology well. A dedicated classroom base for academic work, together with a laboratory for fitness testing would add to current provision, and promote the identity of physical education as an academic subject more strongly.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

272. This was not inspected as a focus subject. However, it is the most successful subject in the sixth form and results are consistently well above the national average. Many of the students begin the course with general levels of attainment that are relatively low. Overall, the examination results demonstrate very good achievement by students and, for some, achievement is outstanding. Two lessons were sampled during the inspection. Teaching in one was very good and the other, excellent. In both, students had researched individual topics and made very good presentations to the class. In a Year 12 class, students who were relatively new to the course used PowerPoint very effectively to present their findings from their work placements

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

Within this cluster of subjects the inspection concentrated on art and design and music. Lessons were also sampled in media studies and theatre studies. Standards achieved by students of the first group in Year 12 to undertake theatre studies at AS level are above average. The teaching of this course is very good and sometimes excellent. In consequence, students achieve especially good standards in relation to their previous attainment and their learning is very effective. In media studies, in one lesson observed, standards are above average and teaching is very good.



## Art and design

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good, especially the high expectations the committed staff have of students.
- Practical demonstrations effectively promote very good craft skills.
- The guidance and support provided for students are effective in helping them to improve standards.
- There are plentiful opportunities to visit galleries to enrich the educational experience of art students.

### Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of a designated studio base to enable sixth-form students to continue their practical work beyond time-tabled lessons.

273. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' positive attitudes also cause the quality of their learning in art and design to be very good. As a result, the students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began the sixth form, is very good.

274. Standards seen in lessons are well above average and reflect the most recent examination results. In Year 12 coursework male and female students achieve equally well. Students handle oil paint on canvas well; this medium is new to them. When painting, students control different effects, from thin watery paint treatments to subtle colour overlay techniques. In homework tasks, such as researching the work of chosen artists for critical studies, they develop independent learning skills and use their competent word-processing skills to present facts and opinions well.

275. In Year 13 coursework, very good drawing skills are enriched by life-drawing sessions undertaken at a local college. Students handle a wide variety of materials boldly and confidently. Their very good painting ranges from finely detailed water-colour to heavy impasto effects, often done with great joy. The impressive quality of work is matched by the regular large quantity produced by hard-working students. The use of colour as a means of expression is a particular strength. Achievement over time is progressively very good and shows much individual flair. The well-above average standards achieved in textiles and painting are a direct reflection of the very good teaching the students experience. Students show good technical skills, such as one student using a sewing machine to produce a lively flame-inspired bodice and another producing good photographic prints in the darkroom. Sound measuring skills are evident in the enlargement of designs.

276. Achievement over time in both year groups is helped by the good verbal and written assessment by teachers and the well-considered guidance provided. The use of all available data, the building up of a body of evidence to inform teaching and planning also contributes to the progress made by students. Teachers'

demonstration of craft skill is the key to the proficiency of students, just as the establishment of a visually stimulating environment promotes a creative, experimental and imaginative approach to study. This is regularly demonstrated in students' vibrant sketchbooks which are crammed full of new ideas expressed in new ways, such as when computer scanning is applied to textiles. The broad-based and well-planned curriculum and access to all available resources provide a suitable structure for learning about art and design at this level. Achievement would be even better if students had access to a studio base where they could continue their practical work beyond the single periods that are time-tabled.

277. Students have a mature approach to their work. They are enthusiastic about their art and design and show a growing sense of responsibility for their own learning, for example when a visit to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park successfully sparked a significant body of work inspired by the natural world. Opportunities are provided for students to enter into live assignments competing with professional artists and colleges. They respond well to these challenges and produce artwork to a standard often associated with a higher level. The good practice of regular group review of work, when teachers ask searching questions, is producing confident speakers who use suitable art vocabulary when expressing their opinions. They know how to evaluate their work, respond to criticism and make informed judgements following visits to regional and national art galleries.

278. In the 2000 A-level examinations, when a small number of students entered, results were below the national average. However, some students who had not previously taken a GCSE examination in art and design achieved B grades, which is exceptional achievement. In the 2001 A-level examination there was a significant improvement and results were well above the national average. In the 2001 AS examination, 100 per cent of students achieved a pass grade.

279. This is a well-managed course that successfully promotes creativity, understanding and skill in art and design. Standards have improved.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above and often well above average.
- The students' achievement is very good at AS and A2 level considering their starting point at the beginning of the course.
- Teaching is very good and the teachers' very good knowledge and expertise in music and music technology is having a direct impact on learning.
- Students are highly motivated not only in their studies but in activities beyond the classroom.
- The department is excellently managed and led, and the teachers work together very effectively as a team.

### Areas for improvement

- None

280. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above and often well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' very good attitudes and very good resources especially in the field of technology also cause the quality of learning to be very good. As a result, students' achievement in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is very good.

281. Standards seen in lessons are above average. In Year 12 students following the AS music course are studying Stravinsky. In a very good lesson, set at a demanding pace, students made good progress in understanding the important features of Stravinsky's early style. This was because the teacher has very good subject knowledge and was very well prepared. The worksheet devised by the teacher enabled the students to describe the chief characteristics of 'The Firebird' and 'The Rite of Spring'. Students can see the differences at a glance, and this will become a useful resource when later styles are studied and for revision. They understand and use musical terminology well. Their composition work is growing in confidence and work done in a lesson showed they are all confident users of ICT for this process. Compositions entitled 'Dawn' are progressing well. Various printouts of each composition reveal that students develop and refine their work and this is aided by sound and regular feedback from their teacher during the lesson. In the first part of the lesson, students looked at Debussy's piano style. This broadened their knowledge allowing them to explore a different perspective using the whole tone scale rather than the tonal approach of earlier composers. Workfiles are well organised and students are already accumulating a good deal of useful reference material, acquired not only in lessons but also from the Internet and books. Their harmony exercises reveal that this aspect is new to them but they are making good progress. There has been no essay writing so far. Music AS level is new in the school this year. In following music, rather than music technology, the department is responding well to the needs of the particular group of students.

282. Students in Year 13 following the music technology course, give critiques of each other's sequenced songs. These critiques allow students to make important decisions about volume and timbre particularly. In the lesson, students were led to think again about their work, through advice from the teacher who focused their listening on to the relevant sections of their sequenced exercises. In the evaluation of their midi-manipulation exercises, the teacher again focused students on an example taken from the Internet. The discussion that ensued, concentrated among other things on length of notes in the vocal line and panning for realism. Amended versions allowed the students to hear the improvements made. Students found both these activities very useful, realising through the teacher's very good advice that musical considerations were of greatest importance when making a decision. In an excellent composition lesson using computers, the teacher was able to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of both students on the course, drawing out appropriate examples from what they listened to. This is an example of teaching in the sixth form that, overall, is very good. Students make good progress with their own compositions as a result. Students work hard and prepare for their lessons well as was shown in a Year 13 lesson on music in film. Students used and understood new

language specific to film music and recognised examples in the film they watched. Unprepared discussions revealed a very good knowledge of the subject by the teacher. Both students in this group as well as one other who took the AS level examination last summer achieved a grade B. In view of the fact that none had done music GCSE and had only limited instrumental expertise, this represents at least very good achievement. The work files reveal the amount of hard work that they and the teachers did in order to achieve this. The work files and discussions with the students also show that the subject makes a good contribution to the development of key skills and especially those of ICT.

283. Results in the subject are good and have been consistently so over a number of years, although numbers taking the examination are small. In 2000 two of the three students taking the examination achieved the highest grades. In 2001 results were better with all four students achieving a grade B. This represents very good achievement in comparison to their starting point in Year 12.

284. The excellent management and leadership by the head of department are responsible for the improvement in standards in recent years. Curricular planning is very good. Teachers share the teaching of the sixth form courses and work together very well as a team, sharing good practice on a regular basis. Students' progress is very well monitored and assessments are shared with them regularly. They are supported in their learning by excellent resources and a dedicated music technology studio, which they use for independent study beyond the time-tabled lessons. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Students in the sixth form are very well motivated and enthusiastic about the subject. They contribute to extra-curricular activities by playing in the groups and bands or supporting performances with their technological expertise. The subject makes very good contributions to the spiritual, moral and social development of the students. The contribution to cultural development is excellent.

## **HUMANITIES**

Each of the four humanities subjects taught in the school was a focus for the inspection.

### **Geography**

Overall, the quality of provision for geography is good.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good and teachers make good use of their own detailed subject knowledge to provide students with a considerable amount of material.
- The fieldwork aspects of the course are good and enable students to extend their key skills alongside their progress in geography.
- Marking is good and supports students in their learning.
- The good relationships developed in the department are supportive and encouraging.

#### Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching and learning styles is too limited to one method, usually through the teacher giving information.
- Targets for development are not sufficiently focused on learning.
- Resources are barely adequate for modern sixth-form studies.

285. Standards seen during the inspection are generally average. Teaching is good overall and standards represent good achievement in relation to the standards being achieved by these students at the beginning of the course. Students work well independently and bring commitment to the course, thus ensuring that their learning is effective.

286. Students in Year 13 achieve as predicted by their GCSE grades. Their learning is good because sometimes they are prepared to question the material in their textbook. In the lesson on globalisation they demonstrated their good general background and awareness of moral issues. They are also able to build on and extend their previous knowledge and the lesson on meteorology gave them an opportunity to develop their understanding of the structure of the atmosphere.

287. Students in Year 12 are only a few weeks into their course and are achieving as expected. They are successful in moving on from their earlier work. The majority were able to take the work on demographic transition from the GCSE course and extend their understanding by criticising the model. In a similar way they showed greater understanding of river basins and coped well with the work on hydrology, river basins and the mathematical aspects of Strahler's model. All Year 12 students complete a river study based on fieldwork results. They formulate aims and hypotheses effectively themselves and have to select appropriate methods of collecting and presenting data. The work enables students to develop their key skills through aspects of communication, numeracy and the use of ICT. This is a good feature of the work.

288. Teaching is good overall and as a result students make good progress in lessons and their learning is good. The knowledge of the teachers is a strength of the department and they are able to introduce students to new material in a clear and structured way. Teachers have very high expectations of all students and they develop very good relationships and a mature and effective working environment. A limited range of teaching and learning styles was observed during the inspection and teachers led in most of the lessons. Teachers plan their lessons well but sometimes miss opportunities for extending the thinking of students in an attempt to cover the wide range of material. Much of the work consists of examination questions and this provides good practice for students and the constructive marking helps them to learn. In summary, teaching is good in preparing students for the examination but does not provide sufficient first-hand experience of geographical enquiry for students in lessons.

289. Students learn well. They are thoughtful and sensible. Their concentration is good and they work independently on their course work. They cover all the AS and A2 topics in great detail and assemble an impressive collection of material in clear and well-organised ways. This helps their learning. In lessons they are compliant

and accept the direction from the teachers. They show interest in their work and extend their knowledge by reading newspapers and watching appropriate television programmes. Many are not very confident in offering ideas or explaining their own thoughts in detail. They are realistic about their achievement although they do not have clear and demanding targets that are focussed sharply on specific learning.

290. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were similar to the national average. A higher proportion of students achieved grades A and B than in 2000. The results of girls are generally higher than those of boys. The number of students choosing geography varies from year to year and the intake in 2000 was very small, with only three students. The majority of students complete the course.

291. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The resources in the department are adequate but not extensive. There are good modern textbooks. Students have only limited access to ICT facilities and are unable to use ICT for data logging in their meteorological studies. They do not have access to 'metsat' facilities or make use of geographic information systems. The library is inadequate to support detailed reading and research at this level.

## History

Overall, the quality of provision for history is good.

### Strengths

- There was improvement in the proportion of students gaining grades A or B in 2001 to almost the national average.
- Teaching is good because teachers are knowledgeable and prepare students well for the demands of the new examinations.
- There are good relationships between teachers and students.

### Areas for improvement

- Resources, especially ICT resources, are insufficient.
- Few higher-attaining pupils choose to study the subject in the sixth form.

292. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average. This standard is achieved through good teaching. Only a small proportion of higher-attaining GCSE pupils choose history in the sixth form. Those who follow the course have good attitudes to the subject and their learning is effective. As a result, students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began the course, is good.

293. Some good individual essays were seen during the inspection. Year 13 students studying Lenin had undertaken considerable research and were willing to talk about their results in a mature way. They considered the evidence and used a variety of sources. A lesson on Britain's developing democracy showed that students had a good understanding of the issues behind the extension of representation in the nineteenth century.

294. Students in Year 12, at the start of their course, have made a good transition from their GCSE studies and are producing promising AS essays. The essays, on the factors leading to the Russian revolution in 1905, showed good research skills, clear understanding and a good balance of explanation. The lower-attaining students are less confident about the writing style required and use more descriptive approaches. In the lesson on America they were able to discuss the problems for the Congress in the late eighteenth century and the issues for the development of a federal democracy. Students develop their key skills well although sometimes their expression is variable and insufficiently polished.

295. Teaching and learning are good because of the extensive subject knowledge of the staff and their clear understanding of the demands of the AS and A2 work. One student had developed his love of history and could relate this to good teaching in earlier years. He had clearly developed historical understanding and a keen political awareness. Teachers are very sensitive to the needs of individual students and ensure that they are well supported in the writing of their individual studies. They make good use of previous examination material to prepare students for the examinations. Relationships are very good and teachers show great respect for students. This is evident in the development of a good working environment and touches of humour that provide a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere. During the

inspection most lessons used question and answer techniques effectively and the small group work in Year 12 was successful. This lesson enabled the students to develop their skills of communication through class presentations. One Year 12 lesson was not demanding and most students were not sufficiently stimulated. Generally, however, teachers have high expectations of students.

296. The quality of students' learning is good overall. In all lessons they make satisfactory and often good gains in knowledge. They develop their analytical skills through the course and develop their ability to make good use of a variety of sources. They are attentive, good humoured and a delight to teach. They generally work at a good pace and respond well to the structured and supportive teaching. When given the opportunity they work collaboratively and support each other well. The Year 12 students were particularly considerate of the needs of an exchange student.

297. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were similar to the national average. They were also average in 2000. In 2001 all students gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was higher than in 2000. Students achieved as predicted by their GCSE results and a small proportion achieved much better than expected. Female students generally gain better results than the males. Students generally complete the course. Only a small proportion of the higher-attaining GCSE pupils chooses history in the sixth form.

298. The departments is well led and managed and the curriculum is well planned to ensure that learning is structured progressively. Resources are adequate but not extensive and the limited ICT provision is not helpful.

## **Sociology**

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is good.

### **Strengths**

- Teaching and learning are very good and consequently students achieve well.
- The teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject engage and motivate students.
- The use of homework is good and involves independent research.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very good and contribute to the good progress they make in lessons.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Students' analytical and evaluative skills are under-developed.
- Results at the higher A and B grades.
- Use written comments consistently when marking students' work, informing them of what they must do to improve.

299. Standards of work seen in the sixth form are above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students attitudes are



very good; they are keen to learn. As a result, achievement in relation to their standards at the start of the course is very good.

300. Standards of work in lessons are good and in one Year 13 lesson very good. This is because of the very good teaching of sociology. Students in Year 13 have a good level of sociological knowledge and understanding which they use effectively in discussions about Erving Goffman's work on the 'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.' They are confident in expressing their views and in providing examples to illustrate aspects of Goffman's theory, for example performance, communication out of character and impression management. They were able to apply Goffman's model to a piece of writing on producing a party political broadcast. This generated a lively discussion and broadened their understanding of how groups of people seek to project a particular image. In Year 12, students are establishing their understanding of sociological approaches to health and disability. In one lesson, Year 12 students showed that they were developing a good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of different research methods used by sociologists.

301. Students' written work shows that they have a good level of sociological knowledge across a range of studies and theories, for example, globalisation, gender issues, health inequalities and functionalism. One good essay on 'value freedom' of sociology contained good references to relevant studies. Students generally write well, are able to express their ideas clearly and show a good understanding of key concepts. Their abilities to extract salient points from the knowledge they have and provide evaluations are less well developed.

302. Students quickly develop their sociological knowledge and understanding. In Year 12, students gain a significant amount of sociological knowledge and understanding which supports their good performance at AS level.

303. Students' attitudes to learning are very good and this makes a significant contribution to the good achievement they make in the subject in relation to their prior attainment. Students are attentive and approach the subject in a mature way, particularly in Year 13. In Year 12, some students lack confidence and find it difficult to engage in discussion or ask questions following presentations by other students. However, they did approach group discussions in a lesson on research methods very positively. In Year 13, students are enthusiastic about sociology and enjoy sharing their views with each other in discussions. They are confident and make valuable and thoughtful contributions to the lessons. They see how sociology contributes to their understanding of the world in which they live. The relationships between teachers and students are very good and support learning very effectively.

304. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. It was very good in three-quarters of lessons seen and excellent in a quarter. Teachers have a real enthusiasm for the subject and a very good level of subject knowledge and understanding. This is used very effectively to provide clear explanations and to probe and develop students' responses to questions. The teachers' obvious interest and enthusiasm for the subject does much to engage and motivate pupils. Teachers' questioning challenges students to think and draw on their previous learning in developing their responses. In a Year 13 lesson on Erving Goffman's work, the

teacher led the discussion very skilfully. This enabled students to draw on their previous learning and build on what they had found out. The oral interaction between the teachers and students is very effective in supporting learning. Teachers want students to be confident learners. In a Year 12 lesson on health and disability the teacher provided the appropriate combination of encouragement and feedback to students who were in the early stages of developing their presentation skills. Teachers provide students with good oral and written feedback on their work although some written feedback on essays does not provide clear guidance on how students can improve. Marking is monitored and teachers do receive feedback on the quality of their marking. Resources are supplemented by the teachers with packs of materials and information about useful web-sites which students appreciate. Homework is used as an extension to learning and integrated into lessons when students have to feedback on the results of their research.

305. Results in A-level sociology were below the national average in 2000 but the very small number of students taking the examination makes comparison with national standards unreliable. Results at A-level improved in 2001 and are at the national average, although the proportion of the higher A and B grades was small. In 2001 standards at AS level are very good with almost all students gaining a grade A or B. This is a more accurate reflection of the work seen in lessons. There are no significant differences in the attainment of male and female students. Standards attained by students with average and below average grades at GCSE are above average.

306. The subject is very well led and managed. Curricular planning is good and there is a strong focus on improving the achievement of students. The head of sociology has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the subject, particularly in relation to maintaining standards of achievement between AS and A2 courses. This will entail a greater focus on developing students' analytical and evaluative skills. Key skills are effectively integrated into the curriculum. There is effective cooperation between the two specialist teachers who work hard to provide a stimulating curriculum.

## **Psychology**

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is excellent.

### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is excellent, balancing theory, research and effective use of time and resources.
- Positive working relationships promote very good learning and achievement.
- Excellent marking informs students how to improve the quality of their work.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Wider independent reading by students and more use of statistical tests.
- The use of databases to support students' learning.

307. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is excellent. Students' achievements

in relation to standards at the start of the sixth form are very good. The curriculum meets the needs of different groups of students. Students' attitudes are positive and also cause the quality of learning in psychology to be very good. There is always an appropriate response to tasks and a willingness to concentrate on them. Students make very good progress in lessons and the quality of work completed is very good.

308. The quality of teaching in psychology is excellent; learning is very good. Students gain a good factual knowledge of the subject and an understanding of the key concepts and skills related to psychology. The standard of teaching in Year 12 is excellent. There are effective lesson plans and the structure of learning is appropriate. Teaching refers to, and builds upon, research in psychology. Teaching develops a critical and evaluative understanding and appreciation of psychological theories, research, vocabulary, concepts, studies and methods. The teachers fully understand the necessary skills in relation to theory, empirical studies and methods of research in psychology. Challenges to students' views are skilfully led by the teachers. Students are exposed to the breadth of theoretical and methodological approaches in psychology. Most students respond well to the careful guidance they receive by applying and selecting their knowledge as directed. For example, the techniques of statistical analysis are developed in relation to the students' own investigative work rather than taught as a separate topic in the abstract.

309. The quality of teaching in Year 13 is excellent. The teachers develop students' confidence and awareness through direct participation and experience of psychological activity. The teachers use good quantitative and qualitative methods. The quality of psychological terms, concepts, conventions and techniques used is high. The teachers expect each student to work hard. Discussion in Year 13 is lively and generates considered views. There is a well planned teaching programme. There is good support to reinforce topics covered in class. Homework is set in both years of a sufficient quantity and quality. All work is marked in accordance with school and awarding body policies and returned promptly. Students are given suitable comments on how to improve the quality of their work.

310. This excellent teaching ensures that the quality of learning is very good. It could be better to match the excellent teaching, if students had more opportunity for independent learning. They could be encouraged to take more initiative in compiling reading lists and notes to widen their independent enquiries. The aims of each lesson are known and understood by the teacher and students. Teaching strategies are effective and relevant to the needs of above average and average students. Teaching takes account of the need to develop students' key skills. These arise naturally on a great many occasions in the programme of work. While students are good at the use of number, they demonstrate a lack of confidence in their attempts to solve problems. Lessons are logical and structured. Students are taught to listen, think, construct their own notes, and question and comment where appropriate. Students should solve a few problems for themselves in preparing for examination. Teachers steer them away from the anecdotal or the superficial, encouraging greater use of established data-bases. The pace of learning is suited to students in Years 12 and 13.

311. Psychology has been provided in the sixth form for four years with increasing examination success. In the last two years results have been well above the national average. In 2001 all seven students passed the examination and four gained A or B grades. The attainment of female students is higher than that of males. The students generally gain higher results than might be expected given their average GCSE results at the end of Year 11.

312. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is clear guidance, and well publicised and understood aims with clear objectives. Curricular planning is very good and leads to a logical progression of learning. Relevant and linked training is undertaken. Teachers and students enjoy positive relationships.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The inspection covered English literature and French. Some English language was sampled. In the two German lessons observed, students made satisfactory progress, increasing their range of vocabulary and language structures. They developed skills in reading, writing and speaking German; their listening skills were good. Results in German were below the national average in 2000 and are likely to be well below in 2001. Some students take GCSE Spanish, but it was not possible to sample any of these lessons.

## English literature

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

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above average as shown in AS and A-level examination results
- Teaching is very good. Teachers plan lessons carefully, building successfully on their very good relationships with students.
- Students learn very well. They often assume responsibility for aspects of their learning and make good progress.
- Students enjoy their work in English literature and are very positive about all aspects of the course

### Areas for improvement

- The procedures for identifying under-achieving students are not clearly identified.
- The sharing of good teaching practice across the department is limited.

313. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good and because students are very positive about their learning and work hard. The quality of learning in English literature is very good and, as a result, the overall achievement of students in relation to their standards on entry to the sixth form is good.

314. In work seen during the inspection students consistently show above average levels of skill and knowledge. Higher-attaining students handle essays such as that comparing the poetry of Thomas Hardy and Douglas Dunn with confidence, following clear lines of argument based on detailed analysis, and moving smoothly to a well-articulated conclusion. By the end of Year 13, the same confidence is evident in their responses to unseen passages of prose and poetry, showing good progress from work in Year 12, which is more superficial and less focused. Writing about relationships in D H Lawrence's short story, 'Tickets Please' is very perceptive and shows sensitive reading of the text. The same degree of maturity and control is evident in work comparing Middleton's, 'The Changeling', and Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. Most other students write competently but without the same range of expression or assured tone. They make wide use of ICT to research and present their work. Finished assignments show clear evidence of painstaking effort through several drafts and over a long period of time. However, even the lowest-attaining students show lively personal responses to their reading, despite some awkwardness of expression and lack of control in sentence structuring, as seen in work on Doris Lessing's, 'Nine African Stories'.

315. Set against their levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form students achieve well in English literature. Results in A level GCE examinations have been consistently above national averages and the AS level results for 2001 also look likely to be above national figures. Value added data, which measures students, progress over time, indicates that during the two years achievement is good and that examination results are above expectations. There is no significant difference in the

performance of male and female students. Elsewhere in the department, results in AS and A-level GCE English language and in GCSE English re-takes are not quite so good but never less than satisfactory.

316. English literature is a popular choice for sixth form students and they are very positive about their work. They are very impressed by the levels of support which teachers give them. They enjoy the responsibility and independence which they have and very few students drop out of either the AS or A-level courses. Teaching and learning throughout English literature courses are very good. Teachers have very good relationships with students and plan lessons carefully. Good preparation for reading Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure' was seen when Year 12 students debated key moral issues surrounding personal morality and public responsibility, thus ensuring that their eventual responses to the text would be well informed. In another Year 13 lesson there was real intellectual rigour in students' work on William Blake's, 'Songs of Innocence and Experience'. The teachers subject knowledge was excellent and students showed in their lively discussion an impressive interest in the poems and the philosophy behind them, which indicated that excellent learning was taking place. In another lesson Year 13 students gave presentations to the rest of the class on aspects of character emerging in the first two acts of Shakespeare's, 'Othello'. This was a demanding exercise to which students responded well, learning quickly as they discussed points made. The teacher skilfully directed the debate without dominating and students were encouraged to modify written assignment titles to suit their own interests and strengths. Students respond very well to this kind of learning environment. In teacher-led lessons the same quality of learning was not evident and students' progress was more modest. Just occasionally teachers lose sight of learning aims when planning lesson activities so that students' learning lacks sharpness. Sometimes essay titles are too complex and diffuse to elicit the best and most direct responses from students. Across the department marking is very detailed and conscientious. Students are made clearly aware of ways forward and they make good progress as a result. Teachers' work with lower-attaining students is particularly impressive. They work hard to ensure that assignments are thoroughly revised and re-drafted to enable these students to produce their very best work. Students use ICT effectively throughout the course to enhance their learning and make good use of the library for independent work.

317. The leadership and management of English literature are good. Teachers work closely together and are committed to raising standards. There are regular planning meetings, when teaching strategies are discussed. Good use is made of the November tutorial week to track and support students' progress via additional lunchtime sessions but formal procedures for identifying under-achieving students are not well established. The department is currently focusing on further ways to share teaching approaches and develop effective course modules.

## **French**

Overall, the quality of provision in French is satisfactory.

### **Strengths**

- Students' positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Good relationships between students and their teachers.
- Effective use of French language assistant in lessons.

- Marking is thorough and gives students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to work independently of the teacher.

318. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. These standards are achieved in response to sound teaching. Students' positive attitudes and good resources matched to students' needs also cause the quality of learning in French to be satisfactory.

319. Students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. They have good relationships with their teacher and are willing to contribute to discussions. They participate in discussions on a variety of topics, for example about the issues involved in the occupation of France during the Second World War. However their responses to questioning are brief and rarely extend to full sentences. In a Year 13 class students identified detail when listening to the French assistante describing the role of women in Algeria. In a Year 12 class students answered questions comparing and contrasting accounts of life in a variety of Francophone countries they had read. Students write for a variety of purposes, including note taking, accounts and essays. They present information and their views about a variety of topics such as the characters in a novel and the Erasmus project. Writing is largely accurate but the range and variety of structures and vocabulary are limited.

320. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons are usually conducted in French and the teacher makes good use of questioning to assess understanding and encourage students to participate in debate. However some closed questioning results in students responding too briefly without the necessity of constructing complete or extended sentences. Students work as a whole group with the teacher and, because activities are led by the teacher, students are not given sufficient opportunities to gain independence in the language, for example by being required to make presentations to others. Activities and resources are well matched to students' needs and capabilities; for example booklets about Francophone countries were at the right level to enable students to develop their understanding of the countries and consolidate their knowledge of vocabulary from a variety of topics. Similarly the teacher made good use of a video and extracts from a novel about the German occupation of France during the Second World War to increase students' understanding of the issues involved and to provoke debate. Students are usually engaged by activities and maintain interest and concentration. Marking of students' work is thorough and gives clear guidance about how to improve. Students appreciate the good relationships they have with their teachers and the help they are given as individuals in improving their standard of work.

321. Results achieved in French are above national averages. However the small number of candidates entered for examination at A/S and A level make comparisons with national figures unreliable. Students make good use of the Internet for research. They have good access to native speakers and as a result their listening skills as well as their understanding of the culture of France are well developed.





## VOCATIONAL AND WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Overall the quality of the provision for vocational education is very good.

### Strengths

- The results are above average and students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are frequently very good and expectations of staff and students are high.
- The courses are very well led, staffed and resourced.
- The monitoring of students' achievement is very good.
- Members of staff are totally committed to ensuring students achieve their full potential

### Areas for improvement

- Where appropriate and possible, combine classes that cover the same units of work to enhance the group dynamic and broaden learning opportunities.

322. Vocational education was not a focus area for the inspection, although it forms a vital and effective part of the sixth-form provision. One-third of students take a vocational subject. The curriculum includes Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) in business, health and social care, travel and tourism, and leisure and recreation. Some of the units on the latter two courses are the same and would be enhanced on occasions by being taught as one. This would enable more dynamic discussion and the effective sharing of ideas to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning. GNVQ Intermediate courses in business and leisure and tourism are available in Year 12. Students can take double, single and part awards and mix their vocational work with AS and A2 subjects. The vocational programme enhances and broadens the sixth-form curriculum. Well-balanced and innovative programmes are offered. The curriculum is socially inclusive, all students have equality of access to the vocational elements within it.

323. In 2000 the results were well above average in health and social care and travel and tourism. Results in business were average. In 2001 results were well above average in health and social care, above average in business and average in travel and tourism. Since most students begin these courses with GCSE results that are below average, these vocational results represent very good achievement. Many of the students move on to higher education; others go into related employment.

324. During the inspection, two lessons from each vocational area were sampled. Standards of work seen, overall, were above average. In all lessons the teaching was good or better: in four lessons teaching was good, in three it was very good and in one lesson teaching was excellent.

325. In a marketing session in a finance class, the teachers seized opportunities to encourage students to develop their own insights and learn in a real context. Students are expected to take responsibility themselves for much of the work. They have to prepare inputs and present them to the class, to use their own experience and express their own views. These successful sessions are made so by the

teachers' refusal to accept monosyllabic responses and their checking that students are learning from what they are doing. Students receive good support to overcome the impenetrable nature of many of their textbooks.

326. A number of local employers are directly or indirectly involved with the vocational courses in the school. As a result of the quality of students' work, skilful teaching and good results, further links with business and the local community are being established to enhance the provision of work-related learning.

327. The provision for work-related learning and work experience in the sixth form is very good. There is a natural extension of the good practice provided by the school for younger pupils. Much of the work takes account of changes in the working environment of which students are shortly to be a part.

328. The integration of the key skills of communication, number and ICT is a major reason for the rapid progress made in lessons by these students; over time students achieve well.

329. Vocational programmes are led and managed very well. The detailed curricular planning and well-resourced units contribute significantly to teaching and learning. Assessment, target-setting and monitoring students' progress are formally embedded within these courses. These processes are valued and taken seriously by students and are another reason for the high standards achieved.