

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EDWARD VI HIGH SCHOOL

Stafford

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124445

Headteacher: Dr Terry R. Brown

Reporting inspector: Mr Ross Maden
2793

Dates of inspection: 1st – 5th October 2001

Inspection number: 189491

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 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	West Way Stafford
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C. Noak
Date of previous inspection:	16 th September 1996

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2793	R Maden	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further
8989	M Romano	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12271	I Thompson	Sixth Form Co-ordinator		
30512	V M Bailey	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form)	
2740	E B Barratt	Team inspector	Geography History (sixth form)	
28178	J Connor	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
7483	R Donne	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31693	P T Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design	
13046	M S Marks	Team inspector	Mathematics	
17923	M M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History (Key Stages 3 and 4) Religious education Equality of opportunity	
31159	C L Simmonds	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)	
30648	B Skelton	Team inspector	English	
21806	P Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology	
12671	M Thomas	Team inspector	Geography (sixth form)	
18670	P Tidmarsh	Team inspector	Music	
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	

3735	A Webb	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4) Physics (sixth form)	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

King Edward VI High school is a comprehensive school educating boys and girls in the age range of 11 to 18. There are 1024 pupils in the school which is above the national average for secondary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 16 per cent which is in line with the national average. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well below the national average and few are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils on the school's special educational need register is broadly in line with national figures but the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above the national average. The attainment on entry to the school is below national averages with over a fifth of pupils entering the school with reading ages more than two years behind their chronological age. The socio-economic data for the wards the school serves indicate that on average the percentage of adults with higher education is close to the national average as is the percentage of children living in high social class households.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school is good. The school achieves standards of work, which are close to national averages. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress. Pupils have good attitudes to school. Almost all of the teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good or better. The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils aged 11 to 16 and the range of courses at sixth form level is designed to meet the needs of its students. There are good care and guidance arrangements for pupils and the partnership between parents and the school is good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the school is good. In relation to the level of funding the school receives the school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in art and design are high.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs especially those with behaviour difficulties are good.
- The good quality of teaching and the commitment of staff.
- The quality of pastoral care is a strength of the school.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The sixth form – particularly the choice of courses.

What could be improved

- The use of data to track the progress of individual pupils and to use this data to set targets for improvement.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development.
- Ensuring that all pupils receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum in design and

technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education.

- The behaviour of younger pupils around the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in September 1996. The proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A*-C has dropped since 1996 but the proportion pupils gaining five grades A*-G and one A*-G has increased. The average A-level points score has increased over the same period. In tackling the key issues identified in the last inspection report the governors have made good progress. The underachievement of boys is no longer an issue. There is a significant improvement in the standards of mathematics. Progress has been made in raising standards in French and music. There have been few improvements in increasing the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development and pupils still do not receive a daily act of collective worship. There have been improvements in the library but it remains underused by pupils for independent research. The quality of curriculum leaders is good and no longer a weakness. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are strengths of the school. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

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

Pupils' results in national tests at age 14 in the year 2000 were below the national average in English mathematics and science. When compared to schools with pupils of a similar background in 2000, pupils in this school achieve results at Level 5 and above which are in line for English, below in science and well below in mathematics. However, results for 2001 show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above for English, mathematics and science. Girls do slightly better than boys.

In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the proportions of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades and one A*-G were below the national averages. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades was in line with the national average. When compared to similar schools, results in 2000 were close to the average for these schools. However, in 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining 5 GCSE grades A*-C, 5 A*-G and 1A*-G fell below the proportion gained in 2000. Results for boys and for girls in 2000 were close to the national average. Analysis of the results for individual subjects in 2000 indicates that there were outstanding results in art and design, with science, French and geography

performing well. Results for business studies, English language and literature, history, mathematics and physics were relatively weaker than the results gained by pupils in their other subjects. The school's analysis of the 2001 results shows improvements in mathematics and English.

In the sixth form the average A/AS level points score in 2000 was well below the national average. In part this is a result of the school's policy which allows some weaker students to follow A-level courses who only achieve low grades. Many students in most courses do achieve the higher grades of A and B. When comparing the performance of results with all schools there are good results in art and design, computer studies and physics. Results are below the national average for economics, English, French, design and technology, general studies, geography, German and music. In the 2001 results, the average points score increased significantly above that achieved in 2000. Over half the entries in A-level art and design, English, history, business education, computer studies and sociology achieved the higher grades of A and B.

Most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 16 in relation to their standards when they entered the school. In the work seen pupils were achieving satisfactory standards in most subjects except in art and design where results were well above average. Pupils' achievements in design and technology, geography, history at Key Stage 3, ICT, music and physical education were good.

Oral skills develop well in Years 7 to 9. Pupils listen attentively and answer readily. Older pupils use standard English and technical words in formal academic work. Few opportunities were observed of pupils being required to read aloud from books or from their own work. The presentation of written work is good in many subjects and particularly good in science. Word processing skills are used effectively by pupils of all ages to produce attractive and well-organised assignments. Marking in some subjects, especially English, corrects errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Other subjects correct only spellings of key words related to the topic being covered.

Numeracy skills are average. Pupils are competent in using basic operations in different contexts and, when it is appropriate, calculators are used effectively.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes and values are generally good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Older pupils are better behaved than the younger ones. Behaviour is better in lessons than it is around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their social development is good.
Attendance	Attendance is good

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. At the time of the last inspection four fifths of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better and this has now improved to over nine out of every ten lessons. Of the 182 lessons observed during the inspection over one in five were judged to be excellent or very good and two-thirds were judged to be good or better. Only seven lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory and one judged to be poor. The quality of teaching is good in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. However, not all teachers make effective use of key words displayed in classrooms.

The quality of teaching is very good in art and design at Key Stage 4. Teaching is good in all other subjects except religious education, mathematics and in English (Key Stage 3) where it is satisfactory. Strengths of teaching include effective planning of lessons, good management of pupils and teachers having high expectations for older pupils. The characteristics of unsatisfactory teaching are that teachers do not fully challenge pupils in the tasks they set or that there are weaknesses in the management of challenging behaviour.

The quality of pupils' learning matches the good standards of teaching. Most pupils work hard and the pace of working is particularly good by older pupils. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to work independently and are often over-reliant upon their teachers. Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum in all years which is socially inclusive. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good. Not all pupils are receiving their full entitlement of design and technology, information and communication technology, and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The provision to support pupils with behaviour difficulties is very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including	Overall, the school makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good procedures for monitoring pupils' guidance and welfare. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Parents' views of the school are generally good. The school is effective in its work with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher is good. He is well supported by his deputies and other members of the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are failing in their statutory duty to ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum in design and technology and information and communication technology. Pupils are not receiving a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by members of the senior management team is good.
The strategic use of resources	The school provides good value for money and adopts the principles of 'best value' in spending its resources. Specific grants are effectively used for the purpose they were intended.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are making good progress • High expectations for pupils • Feel comfortable approaching the school with a problem • Good teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set • Information about their child's progress • The school working more closely with parents • The behaviour of pupils

Inspectors agree with parents on the issues that please parents most. Inspectors judge that the amount of homework set is appropriate for pupils of this age. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good but could be improved around the school outside lessons. Inspectors judge that there are sufficient opportunities for parents to become fully involved in the life of the school. The quality of information the school provides about their children's progress is good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 137 students in the sixth form. All students follow courses taught either in the school or in the Chetwynd Centre. The Chetwynd Centre caters for students from six schools in Stafford and the collaborative arrangements between these schools ensure a very wide range of courses is offered to students. The school has an open-access policy and, whilst good guidance is provided for students on the appropriate courses they should follow, it is accepted that many weaker students do achieve the lower grades in their A-level courses. The proportion of students who 'stay-on' into further education from Year 11 is 73 per cent.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Students achieve standards which are close to the national averages. There is no financial subsidy from the rest of the school to support the sixth form. The retention rate on courses is satisfactory. Most pupils who start courses stay on for completion. Attendance is good and well monitored. The quality of teaching is good. Some courses such as psychology are very popular with students and help to support smaller teaching groups in other subjects. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Strengths

- Support and guidance provided for students.
- Breadth of curricular provision.
- Consistent good quality of teaching

What could be improved

- The opportunities for students to undertake independent research.

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	Good. Examination results are below average but with some improvement in 2001. Quality of teaching is good and students have very positive attitudes to learning.
Chemistry	Good. Standards of work are in line with national averages. Teaching is good and students participate fully in lessons.
Biology	Good. A-level results showed significant improvement in 2000. Popular subject. Quality of teaching is good with a good emphasis on practical

	subject. Quality of teaching is good with a good emphasis on practical work.
Physics	Good. 2000 A-level results better than 2001. Very good teaching with students working well together.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and design	Very good. Standards are well above average. The quality of teaching is very good. Students have excellent attitudes to the subject.
Geography	Satisfactory. Attainment in geography is below average but results for 2001 showed some improvement. Teaching is satisfactory. Students have limited opportunities to develop analytical and interpretative skills.
History	Good. Results in 2001 show a marked improvement on the 200 results. Teaching is good and students respond well to the good teaching.
English	Good. Significant improvement in 2001 for A-level results. Quality of teaching is good and students learn well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Well developed procedures for guidance on choice of courses. Systems for monitoring and supporting progress work very well.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good leadership and management. Arrangements to monitor quality of provision and students' progress work very well. Clear vision as to how improvements can be made.

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"> Students value the guidance they are given before entering the sixth form. The support and advice they receive during their courses. Good relationships with teachers. The range of available courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about progress Advice about future options.

Inspectors agree with students' positive views. Although a high proportion of students who responded to the questionnaire did not feel sufficiently well informed about their future options, many in discussion indicated that they had been given sound advice and inspectors feel that the quality of information provided is satisfactory.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. Over one fifth of pupils enter the school with a reading age which is two years below their chronological age.

2. Pupils' results in national tests at age 14 in the year 2000 were below the national average in English mathematics and science. When compared to schools with pupils of a similar background in 2000, pupils in this school achieve results at Level 5 and above which are in line for English, below in science and well below in mathematics. However, results for 2001 show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above for English, mathematics and science. Girls do slightly better than boys.

3. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the proportions of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades and one A*-G were below the national averages. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades was in line with the national average. Over the period from 1998 –2000 the proportion gaining five grades A*-C were close to the national average and the trend in the school's average points score was above the national trend. When compared to similar schools results in 2000 were close to the average for these schools. However, in 2001 the proportions of pupils gaining 5 GCSE grades A*-C, 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G were below the proportions gained in 2000. However, in relation to their levels of prior attainment, pupils in 2001 actually did better than those in 2000. Results for boys and for girls in 2000 were close to the national average. Analysis of the results for individual subjects in 2000 indicates that there were outstanding results in art and design, with science, French and geography performing well. Results for business studies, English language and literature, history, mathematics and physics were relatively weaker than the results gained by pupils in their other subjects. The school's analysis of the 2001 results shows a similar pattern to 2000 but with improvements in mathematics and English.

4. Pupils enter the school with standards below the national average. By the age of 14 pupils have reached standards which are close to the national average and therefore pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. In years 10 and 11 pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects as standards reached by pupils by the age of 16 are close to the national average. In the work seen, pupils were achieving satisfactory standards in most subjects except in art and design where results were well above average. Pupils' achievements in geography, design and technology, history at Key Stage 3, ICT, music and physical education were good.

5. Oral skills develop well In Years 7 to 9. Pupils listen attentively and answer readily Pupils develop the skills to work well in pairs and small discussion groups. Older pupils use standard English and technical words in formal academic work. In English and in drama, pupils have to explore their feelings and in ICT they have to evaluate their work. Reading for research is used well in art and design. The library is under-used as a research facility. Few opportunities were observed of pupils being required to read aloud from books or from their own work. Technical terms are systematically introduced, for example, in mathematics and science lessons. Displays of key words and technical terms exist in many departments and are used well in modern foreign languages. In many subjects teachers do not always use them when a reference would reinforce learning. The best lessons in many subjects contain clear guidance about the planning of written work. Pupils write well-structured coursework assignments in geography. In science pupils are helped with specific vocabulary and writing frames to construct written answers. In English pupils are taught the importance of using the appropriate style for different types of writing. The presentation of written work is good in many subjects and particularly good in science. Word processing skills are used effectively by pupils of all ages to produce attractive and well organised assignments. Marking in some subjects, especially English, corrects errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Other subjects correct only spellings of key words related to the topic being covered indicating a weakness in the consistency across the school in developing pupils' literacy skills.

6. Examples of good practice were seen in many subjects, but overall the provision is uneven. The full implementation of a school literacy policy and the wider use of learning activities developed from the National literacy strategy will contribute to a more effective strategy for raising standards in literacy.

7. Numeracy skills are average. Pupils are competent in using basic operations in different contexts and, when it is appropriate, calculators are used effectively. There is a lack of consistency in the approach to teaching numeracy and in some subjects, for example religious studies, English and physical education there is little or no evidence of it being taught. In sixth form biology lessons, 'significance testing' is used well and in geography there are good examples of pupils analysing and interpreting data. The lack of a whole school policy and approach to teaching numeracy is the main reason why there are inconsistencies. The school recognises this weakness and under the guidance of a numeracy manager and the head of department, is planning to formulate a policy in the near future.

8. Standards of work seen during the inspection for ICT are below average in Years 7 to 9 and at the national average in Years 10 and 11. These standards are achieved because teaching is good.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

Sixth form

10. In the sixth form the average A/AS level points score in 2000 was well below the national average. In part this is a result of the school's policy which allows some

weaker students to follow A-level courses who only achieve low grades. However, many students in most courses achieve the higher grades of A and B. When comparing the performance of results with all schools there are good results in art and design, computer studies and physics. Results are below average for economics, English, French, design and technology, general studies, geography, German and music. In the 2001 results the average points score increased significantly to close to the national average. Over half the entries in A-level art and design, English, history, business education, computer studies and sociology achieved the higher grades of A and B.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes are good. Their behaviour is generally good with satisfactory personal development and very good relationships. Attendance is good. Inspectors judge that attitudes and relationships within the school have improved since the previous report. The school continues to place a high priority on pupils' behaviour, and the assertive discipline policy is well established. The school uses exclusions appropriately, with average levels of fixed term exclusions and few permanent exclusions. Pupils are given some responsibility and can participate in a wide variety of visits and extra-curricular activities. Attendance is now good, and is above the national average.

12. Attendance levels represent a considerable improvement on the previous inspection, and relationships are now very good. Attendance for 2000/2001, is 93 per cent and above the national average. Unauthorised absence is 0.2 per cent, which is below the national average.

13. Attitudes in lessons are good. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson, where pupils were doing observational drawings, they remained on task throughout the lesson; they were pleased with the progress they made in a difficult task. They described what they had achieved, and what they needed to complete. In a Year 11 English lesson with very challenging material, pupils were very keen to learn, on task and gave well-thought out answers. They listened to one another, and added thoughts of their own, at the same time behaving well. Attitudes in Year 8, where pupils occasionally are seen to be a little more disruptive, and sometimes are given a little more licence to misbehave. However, overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were rarely less than satisfactory, and often good.

14. Behaviour generally in class is good, sometimes very good. Behaviour is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. Behaviour is better in lessons than it was around the school. Pupils drop litter in corridors when it is just as easy to use the litter bins. There is often unruly behaviour by younger pupils around the dining room corridors at lunch time. This behaviour is not representative of the general behaviour, which is good, but pupils are not always polite in passing one another on narrow staircases. Pupils do not move around the school in an orderly manner and not all staff are seen to be consistent in implementing the behaviour policy around the school.

15. The very good relationships seen between teachers and pupils are a strength of the school. Teachers and all staff set an excellent example in their behaviour towards each other, and pupils generally show great respect for them. Teachers know the pupils well, even after only a few weeks in school.

16. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They use their initiative in lessons when working in groups. They participate well in the many extra-curricular clubs (musicals, sports, food club, poetry club etc.), visits to the Black Country Museum, France and many others. The school also has a junior and senior council, with delegates to main school council, where pupils can make their views heard. There is a lack of opportunities to develop pupils' independent learning skills.

17. The access unit and teaching support unit are both appropriate to meet the requirements of identified pupils in the school, and pupils in the access unit have access to the Youth Award, which enables their personal development to be enhanced.

18. The school's attitude to behaviour is focused, believing that pupils cannot learn except in a calm, ordered environment. This is generally reflected in the lessons seen, although pupils in Years 7 to 9 are less well behaved than those in Years 10 and 11. Pupils at 11 get the opportunity to show 10-year-old pupils from the primary school around the premises during their induction day and this is important in developing a responsibility towards the junior school children.

19. Pupils are enthusiastic in their learning, they are rarely bullied and there is no evidence of any sexism or racism in the school. Pupils' attitudes towards other's beliefs are sound. The vast majority of pupils say they like school and their parents generally agreed.

20. Behaviour is satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs. Intensive adult intervention in the access and teaching support units, where relationships with the pupils are good and where pupils' interests are engaged by appropriate approaches and materials, ensures that pupils with special educational needs behave well. The focused nature of the work that learning support assistants undertake as in-class support means that these pupils learn at least as well as their peers. The flexibility of the provision ensures that where pupils under pressure potentially compromise the learning of the group, withdrawal is a viable alternative, which preserves the learning of all. Pupils are therefore given opportunities to reflect on the impact their behaviour has on others. Pupils are offered personal development opportunities through helping at the senior citizens' luncheon club, community coffee mornings and other community improvement projects.

Sixth form

21. Attendance in the sixth form is good. The great majority of students have very good attitudes to their studies and value the opportunities they are offered. In discussion, students are articulate, polite and respect each other's views. They get on well together and support each other. Their concern for others was evident when they chose better facilities for the disabled as their first choice as to what could be

improved in the school. Students make a good contribution to the wider community in a variety of ways. For example, they organised netball tournaments for local primary schools as well as organising a Fun Day for Year 6 pupils. They take responsibility through the sixth form council, and undertook the furnishing of the sixth form common room, providing the furniture and fittings from their own resources. Working relationships with staff are good. The working atmosphere in many lessons, for example in the art studios, is industrious; students develop their work well supported by mature dialogue with teachers. Many examples are seen of students working independently without direct supervision. Many take responsibilities willingly and make a good contribution to the wider school, including the head boy and head girl, who chair the school council.

22. Students' personal development is very well provided for and their attitudes are very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. Teaching and learning is good overall and shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection 87 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better and this has now improved to 96 per cent. Of the 182 lessons observed during the inspection over one in five were judged to be excellent or very good and two-thirds were judged to be good or better. Only seven lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory and one judged to be poor. The quality of teaching is good in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 – 9.

24. The good teaching is having a clear impact on the quality of learning throughout the school and overall pupils are making at least satisfactory gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. When pupils are taught well the pace pupils work at is good. When teaching is good and the level of challenge is high pupils' response is good and in these lessons pupils make good gains in developing their levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, in art and design lessons pupils' creative efforts are good as a result of good teaching.

25. The quality of teaching is good in all subjects except for mathematics and religious education where teaching is satisfactory. A particular strength of teaching is the effectiveness of teachers' planning which leads to a good pace of working especially by older pupils. Teachers share the aims of the lessons with pupils and at the end of lessons teachers test pupils' understanding to judge whether the lesson's aims have been met. The management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and the majority of teachers are consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. On occasions pupils, especially the younger ones, are not fully stretched and the lack of challenge results in pupils making insufficient gains in their learning. The characteristics of those lessons, which were judged unsatisfactory, were that the challenging behaviour of some pupils was not properly managed or that the level of challenge for pupils was low.

26. Teachers use a satisfactory range of teaching methods in Years 7 to 9 and a good range in Years 10 to 11. The variety of teaching methods sustains pupils' interest and concentration in lessons particularly for older pupils. The one teaching method, which is rarely used, is to provide pupils with more opportunities for independent learning. Too many pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning and are over-reliant on their teachers.

27. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory although some pupils have underdeveloped literacy skills. Many teachers display key words in their classrooms but not all teachers make use of them during the lessons. On several occasions teachers, when marking pupils' work, indicate that work is unfinished but pupils have failed to respond to these requests to finish off their work.

28. One fifth of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with standards of reading and writing well below average for their age. The School Development Plan recognises the importance of improving pupils' literacy skills to further their educational progress in all subjects and the school has been promoting teaching methods to develop literacy. The school has also organised three Literacy Summer Schools for students entering Year 7. The English department is currently bringing into its schemes of work literacy progress units from the National Literacy strategy. The appointment this year of an assistant headteacher, with responsibilities for literacy, numeracy and educational standards in Years 7 to 9, is evidence of the school's determination to improve further the pupils' skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing in all subjects as part of an integrated attempt to improve attainment. A literacy management group is being formed with representatives from all subjects and with the task of drawing up a literacy policy for the school.

29. Numeracy skills are average. Pupils are competent in using basic operations in different contexts and, when it is appropriate, calculators are used effectively. There is a lack of consistency in the approach to teaching numeracy and in some subjects, for example religious studies, English and physical education there is little or no evidence of it being taught. In sixth form biology lessons, significance testing is used well and in geography there are good examples of pupils analysing and interpreting data. The lack of a whole school policy and approach to teaching numeracy is the main reason why there are inconsistencies. The school recognises this weakness and under the guidance of a numeracy manager and the head of department, is planning to formulate a policy in the near future.

30. For those pupils taking specific ICT lessons the quality of teaching is good. Some subjects make effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning in their subjects. The exceptions are art and design and design and technology.

31. A feature of most lessons is the constructive purposeful relationship between teachers and their pupils. The good use of praise by teachers enables pupils to feel secure and confident enough to answer and ask questions. On occasions there is an over effusive use of praise, when it is not truly deserved. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is good and in those lessons where teachers demonstrate a real enthusiasm for their subject the response from pupils is very good. Effective extension work to meet the needs of the gifted pupils is identified in mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. There is a lack of consistency across the whole school in ensuring that all subjects identify extension activities for the most able pupils.

32. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and accurately but not all teachers are using marking to indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils comment that homework is sometimes slow in being marked. Although the school has a lot of data from external testing of pupils' attainment this is not yet being used effectively by all teachers to set targets for individual pupils to raise standards. The use of data is more effective in Key Stage 4 where it is being used to predict GCSE grades than it is in Key Stage 3.

33. Many parents raised concerns about the homework set. The inspectors' judgement is that the setting of homework is satisfactory. During the inspection week appropriate homework tasks were set. Pupils felt that the amount of homework set was appropriate but felt aggrieved when their classmates did not meet the deadlines for homework and were given extensions without punishments. Several teachers were rigorous in ensuring that homework tasks were correctly recorded in the pupils' planners.

34. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by learning support assistants. They follow the same curriculum as other pupils in the school. This means that they learn at least at the same rate as their peers. Teachers have access to individual education plans or detailed group information, and are aware of the needs of learners. Sometimes subject teachers do not allow sufficiently for the range of attainment in their classes, which places an extra burden on the learning support assistants in terms of making material accessible to pupils with special educational needs. Pupils who have learning support assistants do not always have equal access to the specialist teachers. On occasions teachers concentrate on the needs of other pupils in the class.

35. The learning of pupils and students with special educational needs is supported by individual education plans as required by the Code of Practice. In Year 7 teachers have access to useful confidential summary information about pupils in the various teaching groups, giving prior attainment data and a brief note about the nature of the pupils' difficulties. Teachers are familiar with the general learning needs of pupils in their classes, and the learning support assistants give effective support in keeping pupils on task, helping appropriately with written work and

ensuring that their behaviour is at least satisfactory. The teaching support unit provides for flexible one-to-one tuition in areas where pupils are particularly under pressure.

Sixth form

36. The quality of teaching is good in the sixth form. Of the 40 lessons observed over one-third were judged to be excellent or very good and four out of five lessons were judged good or better. Only in one lesson was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers have very high expectations for sixth form students and demand high standards. There is a good use of demanding questions, which encourage students to make good quality oral responses. Relationships between students who come from five separate schools are very good and there is a positive attitude to learning. In all lessons students concentrate well and most are very well motivated. The marking of students' work is very good with teachers providing detailed guidance on how students can improve their work. A good variety of teaching methods is used. However, there is a weakness in students developing independent learning skills. On occasions teachers 'spoon-feed' students with detailed information thus depriving them of the opportunity to engage in their own research. Students for independent research rarely use the school library. For many sixth form courses the range of research materials in the library is too restricted.

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

37. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall with good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school ensures equality of access and opportunity so that all pupils may enjoy the rich range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Parents speak highly of the links and relationships with primary schools, which ensure a smooth transfer and transition to secondary school. The provision in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory, as statutory requirements are not met regarding the inclusion of ICT in the teaching programmes of art and design and design and technology. The provision is however broad and balanced. The provision at Key Stage 4 enables pupils to have some choice from a wide range of options. An appropriate curriculum has been designed to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils providing courses leading to the Certificate of Achievement. The entitlement of all pupils to ICT at Key Stage 4 is not being met.

38. The time allocated to subjects is close to the national pattern. However, the constraints on timetabling caused by the requirements to staff sixth form courses results in some unsatisfactory arrangements lower down the school. For example, double periods in subjects such as physical education can be very demanding and exhausting on staff and pupils alike. Three geography classes in Year 8 are taught by more than one member of staff resulting in lack of continuity in pupils' learning.

39. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular and curriculum enhancement activities. They include many activities in sport, drama and music. There are many opportunities for field and foreign trips and exchanges, also for cinema, theatre and museum visits. A variety of educational, training and residential visits, with possibilities to sample university courses and attend conferences, take place regularly. Work experience is available locally and also abroad for linguists. At school there are homework clubs and drop in revision sessions.

40. The curriculum is socially inclusive as it makes very good provision to safeguard equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Particular strengths are the teaching and support unit and the access unit which are housed in an impressive new building. The access unit has enabled an appreciable number of youngsters, who formerly would have been excluded, to continue their education at school. The school recognises the requirements of all its pupils and values the assistance of its experienced and respected support staff. Individual education plans are detailed but often are general rather than subject specific but teachers have no problem identifying the most appropriate kind of support.

41. The programme of personal, social and health education which was singled out as a strength in the previous report has been further developed, extended and updated. Most pupils find many parts of it interesting and enjoyable. The work experience programme in Year 10 continues to thrive and the range of possibilities within this popular scheme has been increased since the previous inspection. The careers guidance service has maintained its good reputation and is able to give independent advice to help pupils with their choices at 14, 16 and 18.

42. Collective worship still does not meet requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4 but strategies to overcome this situation are at an advanced planning stage. The curriculum now reflects more of the multicultural nature of the wider community than was previously the case, especially in art and design, music, English and geography.

43. The curricular arrangements for pupils with special educational needs accord well with the principles of social inclusion as they have opportunities in planned curriculum time to mix with other pupils in the school. The curriculum in the access unit is modified to meet pupils' needs better, but efforts are nonetheless made to maintain breadth and balance by involving specialist teachers in areas such as modern languages in the work of the unit. A range of more appropriate accreditation routes has been introduced, such as the Youth Award Scheme and Entry Level certification, to cater for pupils who are not entered for a range of GCSE examinations. Pupils are, however, expected to gain at least one GCSE certificate.

44. There is no formal procedure for identifying gifted and talented pupils apart from using test data such as the Cognitive Ability Test scores and the information provided from external testing. Individual subject departments plan for extension activities, but the work is not co-ordinated. The special needs co-ordinator has nominal responsibility for this area of the school's work.

45. Overall the contribution the school makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory, although departments generally do not have written policies in these areas.

46. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils was undeveloped at the time of the last inspection and is still unsatisfactory. The school has developed a useful "Thought for the day" and good examples of its use to stimulate thought and

reflection were seen. The quality of this is variable depending upon the individual teacher. Assemblies provide good moral and social development and are appreciated by the pupils but they do not contain adequate opportunities for reflection, or an act of worship. The school has developed a statement concerning the provision for spiritual development but few departments have considered its inclusion in their work. As a result of this lack of conscious planning, few opportunities for development were seen and many missed opportunities were present. Good provision is found in religious education where pupils contemplated the nature of suffering and its effect upon the individual, and tried to reconcile this with the concept of an all-powerful God. Pupils considered the question of life after death, and where sufficient time to reflect was provided, pupils were able to consider their own response to this question. In science, a Year 7 class experienced great excitement and wonder when using a microscope to view the world of plants and insects, and in geography Year 10 pupils were profoundly moved by images of the Tokyo earthquake disaster. In ICT, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own achievement and progress. Generally opportunities are missed for the pupils to reflect on the effect of their learning on them and the emotions aroused by their experiences in school.

47. Provision for the moral development of pupils is satisfactory. There is a noticeable moral element in the some of the work that pupils undertake. In history, for example, they consider the slave trade and the rise of Hitler and the persecution of the Jews. In design and technology there is a consideration of the impact of crime in society through work done on crime prevention equipment. In religious education they consider issues such as conflict and reconciliation, racism, gender, laws and moral codes, and they refer to examples from life such as Mother Maria and the reformed drug addict Nicky Cruz. In addition teachers give clear messages about right and wrong in their expectations of behaviour and relationships.

48. The social development of pupils overall is good. Many subjects use pairwork and groupwork so that pupils have ample opportunity to work collaboratively. Relationships with teachers and between pupils are good. In religious education, pupils study laws in order to reflect on the importance of rules in society. Through music, pupils have opportunities to work together in a variety of well-supported clubs and activities. In art and design, pupils have the opportunity to work in mixed age groupings on special projects, and work done on child development encourages pupils to reflect on the role of the family.

49. The provision for pupils' cultural development is also good. In art and design, their work is anchored on a consideration of other peoples' cultures and art from other times. Pupils work in the neighbourhood alongside visiting artists and visit both local and national galleries. There is a broad multi-cultural approach in the curriculum of the music department, and pupils have opportunities to visit the theatre. Concerts and performances are given both in school and for feeder schools. Trips abroad also give pupils a chance to experience other cultures besides their own, and visits as part of the history curriculum give pupils cultural insights. In religious education, pupils experience artefacts, music and prayer calls, visit mosques, synagogues and cathedrals.

Sixth form

50. The school plays a major role in the Chetwynd consortium which offers students a very wide choice of courses including A-level and GNVQs. The choice of vocational courses has been increased so that the less academically inclined are better served than previously. The popularity of this widened choice and a commitment to open access has resulted in increased numbers. There are anomalies in some subjects where teacher input from the school to the consortium is limited although the number of students from this school is high. There is also sometimes a lack of clarity about overall responsibility for the subject.

51. The curricular provision in the sixth form is currently unsatisfactory as there is no religious education in Years 12 and 13. A module has been prepared within the general studies programme but has yet to be activated. Similarly, no acts of collective worship take place.

52. The school continues to offer good support and guidance on higher education courses so that students can make informed choices. School links with the universities of Staffordshire and Keele are particularly active. The school provides opportunities for trainee teachers to gather practical experience and several school staff have acted as student tutors at Keele.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

53. The school makes good provision for child protection, pupils' safety and welfare. Pastoral care is a strength of the school.

54. The previous report stated that pastoral care was good although there was some confusion about the structure for pastoral care. This inconsistency has been removed with a clear pastoral structure. Child protection and health and safety are well managed. This situation has been improved, with pastoral care now very well administered and a strength of the school.

55. The school makes good provision for pupils' pastoral care. The key stage co-ordinators are the designated persons for child protection, and the school follows the guidelines of the local area child protection committee. The key stage co-ordinators have received appropriate training, and the staff are aware and vigilant for potential problems. Health and safety is also well monitored. The head of science is the designated person, and there is a well-structured policy throughout the school. Procedures for first aid, fire and safety are well established. There are a number of first aiders, and pupils are taught about safety including safe use of tools, electricity, chemicals and other equipment as appropriate within the curriculum.

56. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good, although there are some inconsistencies with the application of the well-structured rewards and sanctions system. The pastoral systems are very good, with the emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem through the use of praise. To receive commendations for homework, classwork or involvement in class activities, pupils are awarded a commendation slip. These are presented at class assemblies to record the special event.

57. The sanctions, which are well known to the pupils, include the use of an encouragement report, to be signed by the parent and a year head each day. A student agreement report is the final sanction before the pupil would normally be excluded. Fortunately, these sanction systems work most of the time, and no further action is needed. However, on the few occasions a pupil goes through the whole system without improvement, the use of the teacher's support unit (for occasional disruptive misbehaviour, or problems in a particular lesson, or with a particular teacher) can be used. For pupils requiring more continuous withdrawal for periods of time, the access unit is preferred. Good records are kept through the sanctions system of pupils in trouble. Members of the senior management team also will monitor serious misdemeanours, bringing in the outside agencies needed (education welfare, special needs co-ordinator, school nurse and of course, the

parents). There are regular meetings of the pastoral team, to monitor the pastoral care system

58. This system is not necessary for most pupils who are monitored by their form tutor. He, or she, will deal with most minor problems or the relevant subject teacher will. Where these are not effective, the head of year becomes involved, and then an assistant headteacher or a deputy headteacher. This system also is used to monitor attendance, and to monitor lateness. The form tutor would normally refer the attendance issue to the home/school liaison teacher, who operates a very good system of home/school liaison, including home visits, which has led to a dramatic increase in attendance. Procedures for monitoring good attendance and timekeeping are very good. The procedures for monitoring behaviour are good. Pupils are actively encouraged to come to school through the awarding of attendance certificates, which are presented in assembly.

59. The governors' report to parents complies with legislation.

60. The school's anti-bullying strategy encourages openness, and pupils feel able to talk to staff. Although incidents are rare, pupils say they can talk openly to form tutors, and they occasionally do. Pupils say that when this happens, the incident is dealt with speedily and well. The same is true of racist and sexist behaviour; this is dealt with well, although it rarely occurs. The main teaching input to dealing with racism, sexism, bullying, caring, is through the cross-curricular programme, which is taught with tutor groups at appropriate levels for the year group involved in Years 7 to 9. The very effective personal, health and social education programme includes in Year 11, a good session on role-play to practise interview skills, which again helps pupils' personal development. This also involves sex education, drugs education, alcohol, solvent abuse, and in Years 10 and 11, the pupils have one period a week allocated.

61. The careers work is very thorough including careers interviews (for those who are not sure of their destinations), and Year 11 pupils complete a National Record of Achievement. The school works effectively with Staffordshire Careers Service, who offer a proportion of Year 9, 10 and nearly all Year 11 students, careers interviews. The Year 9 options evening is attended by the personal social and health education/careers guidance co-ordinators and the department put on a well received post-16 choices evening in January each year.

62. Arrangements for giving guidance to pupils on transfer from their primary schools are very good, with teachers passing on good information about pupils, and using this to support individual pupils. Year 6 pupils experience a very good summer school, which also helps their transition to secondary school.

63. Registration procedures are good and meet requirements. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are effective. The school uses technology in registering pupils for all lessons via the Bromcom system, and this was seen to be used effectively during the week of inspection.

64. There are no serious health and safety hazards, although several minor issues were identified during the inspection, which the school has dealt with.

65. Pupils say they like school and the vast majority of parents felt it helped them feel mature and responsible. The school makes good provision for pupils' guidance on transfer also by publishing the booklet "All you have ever wanted to know about King Edwards V1 School, but never dared ask".

66. Most pupils with special educational needs are identified as having such needs by their primary schools with which the school enjoys good relationships. These needs are, therefore, known and identified to staff as soon as pupils arrive at the school. A referral process exists, publicised to staff, which identifies pupils whose needs become apparent later or whose needs have become more pronounced. Records of tests are kept alongside primary school records and other outcomes of in-school assessment in order to monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The progress of pupils on the support list is monitored by the school's co-ordinator for special educational needs. Annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational need are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

67. At the time of the inspection, the school's procedures for assessment, recording and reporting achievement were under review. A recent audit identified inconsistencies in practice and inspectors confirmed this finding. One of the main tasks of the newly established Key Stage manager is to develop the use of assessment data.

68. Procedures for assessing pupils are satisfactory. There is less difference between teachers' assessments of pupils and results of national tests taken at the age of 14 than was the case at the previous inspection. Currently, in some subjects, including art and design, history, religious education and ICT, assessment data is well used in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils are not given information in all subjects what they should next do to improve.

69. The school has a system of setting targets for pupils. Pupils are involved in setting these targets. The best targets make a good contribution to helping pupils improve but too many targets are not sufficiently specific and not related to the subject. Currently, there is no link between the targets set for pupils and the targets set for the whole school.

70. At both a whole school and departmental level, insufficient use is made of data from assessments to inform the planning of the curriculum. Good practice exists in subjects such as music where the scheme of work has been revised to improve learning of topics, which assessments indicated that learning was unsatisfactory.

71. The school makes extensive use of assessment data to evaluate its effectiveness and to monitor the progress being made by pupils. Training has been organised to ensure that teachers can make good use of this information.

Sixth form

Assessment

72. A very good assessment policy provides for a rolling programme of assessment and review that is aimed at informing students and their parents as to how well they are doing and what they need to improve. The process is well supported by continuous monitoring of individual performance and a referral system that leads to mentoring and support for those who are identified as underachieving. Following interview, students giving cause for concern about their work, attitudes or attendance are set targets for improvement and progress is reviewed after a set period. Students in discussion are clear as to their standards and how they could be improved; they believe that the network of support and guidance is effective in helping them to improve their standards. However, a significant proportion of those who responded to the questionnaire do not feel sufficiently well informed and this is a matter for the school to tackle. Although students in conversation say that the guidance provided on their future options for careers and continuing education is very good, and there is much evidence to support this view, a high proportion of respondents to the questionnaire disagree.

Advice, support and guidance

73. The school provides high standards of care for its sixth form students. Health and safety requirements are given proper attention, particularly in laboratories, studios and workshops. There are efficient procedures to monitor the work and attendance of students working off the school site at the Chetwynd Centre. Attendance is good. Good induction arrangements ensure that students settle quickly into the sixth form and are helped to deal with the higher standards of work and the need to develop their independent study skills. Teachers know their students well. There are good relationships, which gives students the confidence to ask teachers for help and support for both academic and personal matters. Guidance provided by school's staff and the careers service in Year 11 is successfully aimed at ensuring that pupils are well aware of the range of courses open to them and how suitable they may be as their individual choices. A review following GCSE results provides good additional guidance for prospective students.

74. Students with special educational needs are very well supported in continuing their studies in the sixth form. Their needs are clearly understood and they receive effective support both in and out of lessons.

75. In terms of advice and support, students are given opportunities through the careers service and the sixth form co-ordinator to visit universities for open days, and to visit the higher education fair.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. The school makes good provision to include parents in all aspects of pupils' life at the school. Parents are generally pleased with the standards achieved by pupils at the school, and the caring way it deals with pastoral care issues. The previous report indicated that this aspect of the school's work was good but two issues needed tackling. The pupil planner is now used well to monitor homework, and provides an important link between home and school. Teachers now have a specific time allocated (an extended registration period once a week), to monitor planners. This they do, although a small proportion of parents was observed not to have signed the planner in an extended registration period observed. The parents' role in special educational needs reviews has now been formalised and is generally sufficient.

77. The inspection team disagreed with a significant minority of parents who did not agree with the statement that their child got the right amount of homework. Homework is satisfactory in terms of quality and quantity, and is usually recorded in the planner. Some parents do not feel that they are kept well-informed about how their child is getting on. Inspectors judge that reports to parents are good. Although they are occasionally inconsistent in terms of setting targets for improvement, they generally say how the child is getting on. A minority of parents felt that the school was not working closely with parents. The school makes good efforts to contact parents on all aspects of school life, whether by newsletters, the prospectus, or the governors' report to parents, letters to parents, reports and also parent's evenings to contact the school should they have concerns. The inspection team judged that parents have good opportunities to become involved in the work of the school.

78. The school's links with parents are good. Parents support an effective parent/teacher association, which raises money for the school by running social and fund-raising events. All parents are invited to attend events, which many do, and there is a large organising committee, which meets regularly.

79. All parents are welcomed at almost any time, and there is a home/school liaison worker who makes contact with parents if a particular child is absent or is causing concern. The head of year also has contact with parents through letters and parents' evenings and there are many opportunities for parents to visit the school if they have concerns or queries. The school works closely with parents, and the Year 6 contact and transition arrangements are very good, with summer schools and good parental contact early in Year 7. The careers officer attends all Year 9 and Key Stage 4 parents' evenings, the careers co-ordinator and personal, health and social education co-ordinators attend the Year 9 options evening and the careers department puts on a well attended post-16 choices evening, in January. All departments regularly make good quality contributions to the parents' newsletter, which is published termly, and there is a letter from the year head regularly about events, examinations or other information.

80. Parents are involved in their child's homework. The planners are used to communicate homework, rewards, sanctions, attendance and parents generally use them well. The parents can arrange to see teachers at almost any time, and their participation at parents' evenings and support for events such as Grease, the current drama production, are good.

81. Parents are invited to all annual reviews of pupils with a statement of special educational need. These meetings are usually well attended. The school also develops informal contact with parents by carrying out some review meetings off-site, or in pupils' homes. Parents are given every encouragement to establish and maintain contact with the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

82. The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher is good. He is an experienced and enthusiastic headteacher who provides clear leadership for raising standards with a focus on improving standards of teaching and learning through appropriate staff development. He is well supported by his two deputy headteachers. A particular strength of the headteacher and the two deputy headteachers is their presence around the school. They regularly visit lessons and are prominent around the school at lunch and break times and it is evident that pupils find senior staff very approachable.

83. A restructuring of the senior management team has recently been completed. The team has been strengthened with two new appointments. All members of the senior management team have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which reflect the main priorities in the school improvement plan.

84. A key issue at the time of the last inspection was a weakness in middle management. The quality of middle management is good and, as a result of staff changes and staff development previous weaknesses have been effectively tackled. Staff with curricular and pastoral responsibilities provide good leadership.

85. The governing body is well informed about the work of the school and uses this information to contribute effectively to the formation of the school improvement plan. They receive the outcome of all reviews and ensure that targets are set and reviewed. In most respects the school fulfils its statutory duties but the governing body is failing to ensure that all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship, art and design and design and technology are not using ICT to support teaching and learning. Not all pupils are receiving their entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11. Religious education is not provided for all students in the sixth form.

86. The school improvement plan has an appropriate number of priorities for raising standards. The issues identified by the inspection team closely match the priorities identified by the school. Those identified by the school include the effective use of ICT and in the use of assessment data to raise standards. For all priorities there are clear targets with effective strategies identified to meet the targets. Timescales by which targets will be reached are not always identified.

87. A weakness at the time of the last inspection was the lack of whole school monitoring and evaluation. The senior management team in developing and implementing effective department reviews has made considerable progress. There is some inconsistency among heads of department in the importance they attach to monitoring and evaluating the work in their subjects.

88. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Documentation on provision and practice is clear. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the requirements of legislation are met in full. There are good links with the special educational needs designated governor who attends meetings regularly and ensures that special educational needs retains a high profile in governing body meetings. The report of the governing body to parents technically complies with statutory requirements but lacks detail in some key areas such as describing the principles for the allocation of resources to and amongst pupils with special educational needs and explaining how governors allocate funds to ensure that provision specified in statements is made.

89. An effective new structure has been put in place to reflect the increased size of the learning support team. Three assistants have been designated senior learning assistants in order to improve communication and raise the professional profile of the learning support assistants through increased training opportunities and better methods for dissemination of good practice.

90. The access unit for particularly disaffected pupils is very effective. It has been especially successful both in improving the attendance of these pupils and in reducing significantly the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The "open door" philosophy of the unit reflects the vision of the special educational needs co-ordinator and his staff for the ways in which pupils under pressure or at risk can best be supported.

91. The access and teaching support units are both housed in a brand new building which opened for use in September 2001. Accommodation for the units provides a cheerful, calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils are

encouraged to give of their best. Targets for reintegration into mainstream lessons are negotiated with pupils so that they can reflect on the consequences of their behaviour and its impact on others. The accommodation is well provided with facilities such as books and ICT, which is well used as a tool for raising the levels of attainment of pupils on the support list through such software as the 'SuccessMaker' and 'Destinations' packages. The high standard of the accommodation has been instrumental in the socialisation of pupils to the extent that they contribute to luncheon clubs for senior citizens, participate successfully in coffee mornings and undertake community improvement projects. Coupled with the establishment of the new accommodation for the units, the appointment of a co-ordinator for the access unit has ensured that the special educational needs co-ordinator can more effectively target his time towards the effective management of the special needs provision overall.

92. Staffing in the school is good. In almost all areas there is a good match of teachers and support staff to meet the school's needs. All are properly qualified. There are very good arrangements in place for the induction of new staff and especially so for newly qualified teachers. They receive and value support from both professional and pastoral mentors. Learning support staff are in good supply many being well deployed to meet the special educational needs of pupils in the teaching support and access units. The quality and performance of the administration, clerical and technical staff support the work of the school most ably. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are in place and this process has already begun to contribute to their professional development.

93. Since the last inspection more time and funding have been allocated to staff development and in particular to middle management training. Through New Opportunities Funding the majority of the staff are undertaking ICT training and several staff indicated they now felt much more confident in using ICT to support teaching and learning. The schools 'Annual Staff Review' has been instrumental in establishing the climate for development and setting an agenda for improvement.

94. Accommodation is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection all subjects have their own base in a designated area and these are now enhanced with information and examples of pupils' work. The school has an ongoing plan for looking after its buildings and improving its facilities. One noticeably good feature is the facility for ICT that has now been installed in most departments.

95. The facilities for design and technology, however, are unsatisfactory. The area has been divided into partitioned spaces that are too small to accommodate large groups of pupils. Parts of the whole area are in serious need of refurbishment. There are no hand washing facilities in the food area.

96. The resources available to support teaching and learning are good. In music, modern foreign languages, geography, ICT and physical education resources are used well. There is a good supply of specialist computers in well equipped rooms. However, teachers of art and design and design and technology have difficulty in accessing the computer rooms.

97. The library is not used well as a learning resource and this was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Displays have improved and the library is open all day except for thirty minutes at lunch time. Considerable efforts have been made to increase the number and range of books since the last inspection but its use by older pupils and students is very limited. In several subjects, for example, English, history and music the number and range of up-to-date books is insufficient.

98. The expenditure per pupil is in line with the national average. Finances are managed effectively. Opportunities are taken to ensure that the principles of 'best value' are followed when making decisions on the purchases of goods and services. The most recent auditor's report was positive and contained recommendations which have been accepted by the school. The financial planning for the current year has reduced the small deficit from the previous year. Specific grants, including those for special educational needs, Standards Fund and New Opportunities Funding are spent effectively on the purposes for which they were intended and in line with the priorities identified in the school's development plan.

99. In relation to the level of funding the school receives and the standards pupils achieve the school is providing good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

100. Leadership and management are strong. Very clear educational direction is provided, standards are monitored and there is a clear view as to how provision may be improved. Development planning is the result of a well-developed, continuous process of self-evaluation. The complex arrangements that enable the school to extend its sixth form provision through collaboration with five other schools at the Chetwynd Centre are managed very well.

Resources

101. The adequacy of learning resources in the sixth form is satisfactory. The quality of resource materials produced by teachers to support learning is good, especially for business studies. There is some over-reliance by students on teachers producing resource materials and opportunities for wider reading and research are limited. Most sixth form students do not use the school library for independent research, in part because the resources available for them are limited. Class sets of text books are available for use in lessons but students and their parents are sometimes encouraged to purchase their own copies for use at home.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

102. In order to raise standards higher the governors, headteacher and teaching staff should:

- (1) Use the data available to track the individual progress of individual pupils and use the data to set targets for improvements for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
(Paragraphs: 68-70)
- (2) Improve the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development by:
 - ensuring a consistent use by all teachers of 'Thought for the day'
 - increasing the opportunities for reflection in assemblies
 - ensuring all departments respond to the school's statement on spiritual development.(Paragraph: 46)
- (3) Ensuring that all pupils receive the full entitlement to the National Curriculum by:
 - ensuring that all subjects have access to ICT resources to enable them to use ICT to support teaching and learning
 - ensuring that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive their full entitlement to ICT
 - ensuring that all pupils receive their full entitlement to design and technology
 - ensuring that all sixth form students receive their entitlement to religious education.(Paragraphs: 30, 85, 164-183)
- (4) Improving the behaviour of younger pupils around the school by:
 - implementing consistently the behaviour policy within the school;
 - reducing the amount of litter dropped by pupils around the school;
 - ensuring that pupils move in an orderly manner around the school when moving between lessons.(Paragraph: 14)

Sixth form

- (1) Enable more students to work independently by:
 - increasing the level of resources within the library to enable students to have access to appropriate levels of resources to support sixth form courses
 - ensuring that teachers set appropriate tasks for students which develop their research skills.(Paragraphs: 36, 101)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	142
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	5	23	64	43	6	1	0
Percentage	4	16	45	30	4	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	14	17	7	1	0	0
Percentage	3	35	43	17	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	884	137
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	135	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	202	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	91	92	183

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	47	61	61
	Girls	60	53	56
	Total	107	114	117
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (58)	62 (54)	64 (52)
	National	N/A (63)	N/A (65)	N/A (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (14)	35 (33)	31 (25)
	National	N/A (28)	N/A (42)	N/A (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	55	56
	Girls	69	54	56
	Total	120	109	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (60)	60 (58)	61 (52)
	National	N/A (64)	N/A (66)	N/A (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	N/A (20)	N/A (35)	N/A (25)
	National	N/A (31)	N/A (39)	N/A (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	102	94	196

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	32	83	89
	Girls	33	76	85
	Total	65	159	174
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	33 (39)	81 (91)	90 (94)
	National	N/A (47.4)	N/A (90.6)	N/A (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	31.6 (36)
	National	N/A (38)

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	19	29	48

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.6	19.9	17.4 (12.6)			N/A (2.0)
National			N/A (18.2)			N/A (2.7)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	875
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	1	1
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	60	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)	68.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	597

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	21.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3 042 041
Total expenditure	3 046 934
Expenditure per pupil	2 830
Balance brought forward from previous year	4 820
Balance carried forward to next year	(73)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	24.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
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	1021
Number of questionnaires returned	301

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	56	11	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	55	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	55	19	7	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	51	27	6	3
The teaching is good.	17	63	11	3	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	45	25	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	44	6	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	46	6	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	53	23	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	17	53	11	5	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	57	9	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	47	15	6	12

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Effective management of team of committed teachers.
- High expectations of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' attainment at GCSE.
- Greater use in Years 7 to 9 of learning activities adapted from the National Literacy Strategy.

103. Standards of work seen in English were satisfactory overall. Pupils' abilities in English when they enter the school in Year 7 remain below average with more than one in five having a reading age two years below his or her chronological age. The same proportion is one Level lower than their peers in National Curriculum tests at age 11. Attainment at the end of Year 9 declined between 1997 and 2000 when it was below the national average with 58 per cent reaching Level 5 or better. Attainment rose in 2001 and the proportion reaching level 5 or better reached 61 per cent and the number reaching Level 6 or better increased significantly from 14 to 24 per cent. At this age girls achieve better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at all ages.

104. Pupils make satisfactory progress for their abilities in Years 10 and 11. However, their attainment at GCSE remains below national averages in both English Language and in English Literature. Attainment in English Language in 2001 was at the same level, but there was an improvement in English Literature with 53 per cent achieving grades A*-C.

105. The quality of teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and it is good in Years 10 and 11. In a third of the lessons seen the teaching was very good. In the sixth form three quarters of the lessons inspected contained very good teaching and some outstanding teaching was seen, promoting very high standards of learning.

106. Many lessons contain a good mixture of activities, on language and literature, with individual or small group tasks and some oral and some written work. Few examples were seen of the short active literacy exercises developed by the National Literacy Strategy to improve pupils' language skills in Years 7 to 9. Expectations are

high and lessons are generally brisk and purposeful, although in a few lessons loud or disruptive behaviour meant that some time was lost. Teachers manage groups of pupils well and positive relationships with pupils mean that they enjoy their lessons and respond well to the tasks set. The organisation of pupils in classes according to their ability ensures that the majority are working at the appropriate level. Extension activities for the most able are not defined with sufficiently clarity and more should be done to identify gifted and talented pupils. Pupils of low prior attainment make good progress and the inclusive philosophy of the department expects all pupils to achieve at GCSE. The work of Years 10 and 11 is thoroughly and accurately marked, and pupils benefit from praise, constructive criticism and an indication of the standard of their work in relation to GCSE grades. At this age pupils receive useful guidance about personal targets. Marking of the work of Years 7 to 9 is not as good. There appears to be no uniformity of practice and the majority of pupils do not receive precise guidance to help them understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work in relation to National Curriculum standards for pupils of their age. Although errors are carefully noted, the inspection of pupils' work revealed little evidence of corrections being required. Homework is used regularly, most often to consolidate or extend work done in lessons.

107. Pupils make good progress in listening and speaking. They answer questions with answers that indicate that have been listening carefully. They are enthusiastic but polite and there is little calling out. The most able can develop answers with more detail, with reference to evidence or better expression, for example in a discussion of individual freedom when studying "The Handmaid's Tale" or "1984". Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups and can build upon one another's answers. Pupils can use standard English well when appropriate for formal, academic discussion. Teachers read well and set good examples, but few opportunities were observed of pupils being asked to read aloud with accuracy of intonation and expression. When it did occur, for example in a Year 8 lesson on "A Midsummer Night's Dream", pupils read well. Pupils are required to read from a wide range of materials, from fiction to media studies, from the printed page to electronic sources and they learn to evaluate the quality of what they read or download. Classes use the library and pupils are taught library skills in "retrieval" lessons, but at other times library access is restricted and the book stock is small for a school of this size. Writing skills are taught and develop satisfactorily. In response to a good variety in their reading, pupils write fluently and expressively in a range of styles. Teachers emphasise the importance of understanding the aims, readership and style associated with a piece of writing. Students are instructed in planning skills and helped with redrafting and correcting at appropriate stages in the writing. Pupils of low prior attainment in Years 10 and 11 need more help in the development of argument in their writing, so that they deal more with issues and judgements and less with recounting the story or describing the characters. Key terms and relevant vocabulary are systematically introduced as pupils discuss ideas and plan their work so that able pupils in Year 10 and 11 are able to write convincingly about difficult topics like political satire and science fiction. Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are corrected. Many pupils use word processing technology to produce attractive and well organised written work. No pupils were observed whose progress was being impeded because their knowledge of English as an additional language

was at an early stage. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and make good progress.

108. The English department is well managed. Aims and priorities are in line with school targets; are clearly set out and are shared by the team of English teachers. Changes in management since the last inspection mean that the day-to-day organisation of the subject is good and is supported by good co-operation and effective delegation of responsibilities. Resources are not adequate so a shortage of texts led to dependence on photocopied extracts. Classroom accommodation is good. Rooms are large, attractive and most of them are quite closely grouped, but the department lacks a base where teachers can collaborate, leave work in progress and store pupils' files securely. The curriculum is good at all ages and is extended by a range of additional educational opportunities, for example: theatre visits, or Shakespeare at the castle, Book Club, the Young Writers Competition and the Year 9 Newsletter. The curriculum in English also makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The head of department has not yet been in post for a year, but a strong sense of educational leadership is already developing and is being reflected in the enthusiasm and the commitment of the department. In areas of curriculum, organisation and standards achieved, the subject has made good improvement since the last inspection. The capacity for future improvement is good.

Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in Drama is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Relationships with pupils.
- Extra curricular opportunities provided by Drama Clubs and school productions.

Areas for improvement

- Standards attained by pupils.
- Specialist accommodation and resources for drama.

109. Standards of work seen by pupils in Years 10 and 11 are lower than expected for pupils of that age. Pupils demonstrate good ability in working together to create dialogue appropriate to character and situation. Performance skills, related to movement, voice and staying in character are, however, low by GCSE standards. Specific skills like freeze frame and aspects of method acting are not used effectively when students attempt them. Significant reductions were made to the written coursework marks of the first group to be entered for GCSE in 2001. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and meets GCSE requirements. Drama in Years 7 to 9 is taught within English lessons. It is based on literature and is often part of the preparation of those Shakespeare texts tested in the national curriculum at the end of Year 9. It does not aim to provide the wider drama grounding in standards, techniques and continuity of learning that would benefit pupils taking the subject at GCSE and the restricted experience is limiting standards achieved. The teaching of drama was satisfactory in all of the lessons observed and good in one third. Pupils enjoy good relationships and respond enthusiastically. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

110. The subject is inclusive in that pupils of all abilities work together well. They learn drama skills, explore ideas and are systematically required to evaluate their own and others' contribution to group activities. Drama makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils. Extra-curricular opportunities in drama are good. Pupils make educational visits to the Victoria Theatre in Stoke on Trent for demonstrations of technical and backstage skills. They have produced a pantomime 'Cinderella' for performance in primary schools and primary school pupils are invited to preview performances of the annual school production. Drama club operates twice a week and Year 11 volunteers maturely help organise the activities of younger pupils. The annual productions of musicals, like 'Dracula Spectacular' or 'Grease' this year, provide valuable opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to work together over several weeks with the support of many teachers. Resources for drama are inadequate. The room partially converted into a drama workshop in June 2000 lacks curtains, lights and a sound system. These and more basic resources, for example a wardrobe rail, simple staging blocks and some props, would immediately increase the range of educational experiences open to pupils and would help to raise standards. The management of the department is satisfactory. The educational

leadership is good in terms of curriculum and activities, but there is a need for greater understanding of the standards required for GCSE.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department.
- Use of computers to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching in some classes.
- Ensure pupils use and apply the mathematics they have learned in a range of different topics.

111. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with standards in mathematics that are average. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11 standards of work seen in lessons are average. Results from the end of Year 9 national tests in 2000 are below average although there has been a significant improvement in 2001. Compared to similar schools, test results overall are below average but at the higher levels results are average. In GCSE examinations, results are below average but the proportion of pupils attaining the higher A* or A grades is in line with the national average. In 2001 GCSE results slightly improved.

112. There are no significant variations between the test results of boys and girls or between pupils from different minority ethnic groups. In the last 5 years, national test and GCSE results have not shown much improvement until this year. The GCSE results in mathematics are in line with other results in the school. Overall, taking account of pupils' attainment on entry and the standards of work seen in lessons and in national tests and GCSE, pupils' achievements by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are satisfactory.

113. Standards of attainment across most aspects of mathematics are average but below average in using and applying the mathematics they have learned. This is because pupils have insufficient opportunities to apply skills learned across a wide range of topics and there are too few occasions when pupils are able to develop and improve their independent learning skills. The national numeracy strategy is rightly emphasised and in particular the start to lessons is usually very effective. Teachers are quick to involve pupils in mental mathematical activities. In the best example in a Year 8 lesson on probability, the teacher ensured all pupils were involved in a multiples game and this meant they enjoyed their work and saw learning as fun. There are instances where teachers effectively summarise what has been learned in the lesson helping pupils to remember new knowledge gained and skills learned. This does not always happen and contributes significantly towards pupils forgetting the work they have covered.

114. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning overall is satisfactory. There are some instances of good and very good teaching. Relationships with pupils are particularly good in Year 10 and Year 11 and basic skills are taught adequately in all years. Improving literacy skills in mathematics lessons is appropriately emphasised.

Key technical terms are identified and pupils encouraged to use and understand these terms. Computers are used well to support learning and pupils' skills in using them are evident. The department uses computers frequently making good use of the software available. In one lesson, pupils used a range of appropriate software to consolidate their number work and improve their understanding of place value.

115. The main strengths in teaching include good mental mathematics at the start of lessons where pupils are encouraged to think carefully about their answers to questions. In one lesson, pupils were given clues when considering difficult questions and this motivated them to make greater efforts. Homework is usually appropriate often checking that pupils have understood what they have covered in the lesson. Expectations are high, particularly in Year 10 and Year 11. In some lessons, resources are used very effectively. For example in one Year 10 lesson on bearings the teacher used the white board, overhead projector, protractor, a map and involved all the children in the class. The pupils enjoyed the lesson, learned about the importance of accuracy and left with a clear idea about bearings.

116. There are some areas for improvement in teaching. In some classes, higher attaining pupils are given work that is insufficiently challenging and inhibits their progress. For a small minority of pupils inappropriate work contributes to unruly behaviour. There is a lack of opportunity for pupils to investigate problems and this depresses standards in problem solving and prevents pupils improving independent learning skills. Pupils often respond to questions from the teacher with short one-word answers that do not require much thought. Sometimes question and answer sessions are too long and this causes pupils to lose interest.

117. Numeracy skills are average. Pupils are competent in using basic operations in different contexts and, when it is appropriate, calculators are used effectively. There is a lack of consistency in the approach to teaching numeracy and in some subjects, for example religious studies, English and physical education there is little or no evidence of it being taught. In sixth form biology lessons, significance testing is well used and in geography there are good examples of pupils analysing and interpreting data. The lack of a whole school policy and approach to teaching numeracy is the main reason why there are inconsistencies. The school recognises this weakness and under the guidance of a numeracy manager and the head of department, is planning to formulate a policy in the near future.

118. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, pupils make satisfactory progress. In the early years, pupils build successfully on work from primary schools. They are confident users of number skills and draw increasingly more complex tables and charts although less progress is made in interpreting this data. Good progress is made by higher attaining pupils in the use of trigonometry where pupils can answer questions relating to three dimensional objects. Satisfactory progress is made for many pupils in aspects of probability but higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. Although gifted and talented pupils have not been formally identified, there is evidence from the national tests in Year 9 and GCSE results in Year 11 the very highest attainers in mathematics are adequately catered for. School results for higher attaining pupils match national averages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

119. Pupils respond well to teachers. Good relationships are formed and the good use of resources ensures pupils remain motivated and interested in their work. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good. Behaviour is generally good and there are many instances where pupils work well together helping and supporting each other. These positive qualities ensure a good atmosphere for learning is established and pupils' progress is enhanced.

120. The curriculum is well organised, broad and balanced with all aspects well planned for; hence statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is enhanced by the effective use of computers. A minority of pupils are insufficiently prepared for their GCSE coursework in Year 11 because they have not had enough practice. The department provides equal opportunities for pupils through the GCSE and certificate courses on offer and provides effective support for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are encouraged to help and support each other. Reports to parents are very good containing curriculum strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement.

121. Leadership and management overall are good. There is a clear departmental plan with appropriate priorities identified. The department's aims are in line with school aims. There is a shared commitment from staff to improve standards and they are hard working.

122. Since the last inspection standards are now in line with national average, curriculum organisation and planning is now good and leadership and management has significantly improved. There is still work to be done on giving questions to pupils in a wider range of context and some pupils are still too dependent on instructions and guidance from the teacher. Taking all of these factors into account, improvements since the last inspection are good.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and commitment
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils
- The level of practical work provided

Areas for improvement

- Continuing the development of materials and strategies to allow higher attaining pupils to reach their full potential.
- Further development of the new schemes of work to include opportunities for assessment and the use of ICT.
- Increasing the opportunities for pupils to write in their own words, about what they see and do.

- Building on the present assessment system so that pupils are aware of their National Curriculum levels and estimated GCSE grades, so that targets can be set for improvement.

123. On arrival at the school, pupils have a wide range of science experiences. Their previous attainment is close to the national average level according to tests at the end of Year 6, but five months later they are not performing to this standard. School results at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average level for all schools nationally in 2000. The results in 2001 have improved upon this. Boys performed slightly better than girls in these tests. When compared with schools of a similar nature, King Edward's results are well above the national average. Progress through the first three years is therefore good.

124. GCSE results for 2000 matched the national level for all schools, in the A*-G range of grades, and the 2001 results have improved on this. In the A*-C range, the 2000 results were below the national level. 2001 results again improved on the previous year, and the trend is one of improvement, year by year. In 2001 there was no noticeable difference between boys' and girls' results. In addition, pupils in the lowest attaining groups in Years 10 and 11 had the opportunity to participate in the examination board's Unit Award Scheme, gaining a large number of certificates, some pupils achieving the maximum of six in a year. Progress through Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

125. Achievement in lessons in the first three years is generally satisfactory and matches teachers' expectations for each pupil. Pupils are taught in groups according to ability, and the standard is often understandably below national expectation for lower attaining pupils. The presence of pupils with poor reading skills also affects the overall standard and progress, despite the use of especially designed printed material and support from teachers and classroom support workers. Nevertheless, progress through these years is steady and the standards achieved at the end of Year 9 represent an improvement on those seen soon after pupils' arrival at the school.

126. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is overall satisfactory but varies more widely from teaching group to teaching group. When personal interest in a task is high, the level of achievement is often above what might normally be expected. An example was a Year 11 group who were putting into execution their own experimental plans and finding unexpected problems along the way. The challenges that this presented and their determination to make things work properly fired their interest and enthusiasm and resulted in a higher standard of work. There was no opportunity to see entire individual investigations done during the inspection, but various sections were observed, and work submitted to the examination board last year was scrutinised. Pupils had clearly absorbed the advice that had been given and had improved their levels of achievement from one investigation to the next, building on the foundations laid in earlier years.

127. Across all five years, pupils with special educational needs cannot be distinguished from their classmates in practical or spoken work. When they are given extra support, their written work is often of comparable standard, but without this help, written accounts are often poorly done or unfinished. Most of these pupils make similar progress to the rest of their teaching groups. A Year 9 group of low-attaining pupils, investigating electrical circuits with the help of especially designed worksheets, and well supported, publicly demonstrated what each circuit would and would not do, producing a high degree of confidence amongst the class who afterwards could confidently state which circuit would work, which would not, and the reason why not. Their level of knowledge and confidence was much higher than would normally have been expected.

128. The standard of teaching is good. Teachers have a good command of the subject and their enthusiasm and commitment communicate themselves to pupils and raise interest and motivation. Lessons are well planned, use available resources to the full and contain plenty of challenges. Practical work forms a high proportion of lesson time, and is eagerly anticipated by pupils. Sensible ground rules set out in Year 7 mean that work is well set out and usually neatly presented, and staff build on this foundation, taking great pains to ensure that pupils understand unusual words and scientific terms and use them correctly in speech and in written work. For most pupils therefore, learning is a steady progress through a variety of topics. Because pupils are well known to most of their teachers, individual difficulties are known in advance and unobtrusive support can be given. Similarly, pupils' individual interests and enthusiasms can be used to enrich a lesson and to move it forward. Pupils with short attention spans find themselves kept involved by changes of pace and a variety of activities, and a lesson lasting 100

minutes is frequently drawing to an end before they realise it. Information technology techniques form an increasingly important part of science teaching and pupils normally experience many aspects of the technology in all years and are encouraged to make use of it for homework and in class. Staff are firm but fair in their management of behaviour, but there is a small minority of pupils, particularly in the early years, that takes advantage of the teacher's involvement with other pupils to behave noisily and to interrupt the progress of the rest. Most teachers know these pupils of old and take measures to ensure that the rest of the groups is unaffected by individuals who lack self-discipline. By contrast, high-attaining pupils apply themselves well, sometimes finishing the set task quickly but are then not extended to test their full potential. A valuable part of teaching by experienced staff is their detailed knowledge of examination requirements and of the techniques that pupils need to present their work to best advantage. A feature of lessons is the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils. This results in a well-mannered, informal atmosphere in which sound learning can take place, and in which pupils are not afraid to ask for help. Class control is then effected with a light touch, and shy and unconfident pupils become as involved as the rest and grow in confidence. The overall learning environment is therefore a supportive and caring one to which most pupils respond positively. The homework set during the inspection has been relevant and achievable. Notebooks have been marked regularly, but pupils would benefit from more extended comment on how to improve their work.

129. Pupils come to lessons expecting to enjoy their science and are interested and well motivated. They look forward to experimental work and tackle it purposefully. They are friendly and polite in their relations with all adults, and visitors are spoken to in an open and well-mannered way. Laboratory discipline is good, and pupils take responsibility for their work from collecting their apparatus to returning it at the end. They also readily acknowledge their mistakes and share data and equipment willingly. There is a great deal of mutual help over minor problems and co-operation in small-group working is good.

130. The leadership of the department is very good and it is well managed. There is a strong team spirit, and new members of staff are well supported, both formally and informally by their colleagues. Accommodation varies in standard from one laboratory to the next, but they are all adequate for the present group sizes. Resources are at a satisfactory level and careful budgetary planning and maintenance maintain this by the technician team, which also supports good teaching with a first-class service 'behind the scenes', delivering and removing equipment unobtrusively.

131. The last inspection report suggested six areas that could be improved upon. Five of these have been effectively tackled, and the outstanding one, that of the requirement for more supportive marking, is acknowledged by the department. Results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 have risen, and the improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The standards achieved in GCSE examination are very good.
- The teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for pupils' provision for the spiritual and moral development of pupils needs planning.
- The opportunities to use ICT needs to be established for all pupils.

132. In the year 2000 GCSE examination, all pupils who entered the examination gained grades A*-C. These results were well above the national average. In the year 2001 GCSE examination this high standard was maintained and, once again, all pupils gained grades A*-C. The high standards seen at the previous inspection have been improved upon, at much greater than the national average. Pupils' results were better in art and design than in other subjects.

133. By the end of Year 9, the standards in pupils' attainment are above average. Assessments by teachers show that very few pupils do not reach or exceed the expected standard. Work seen during inspection confirms this. Attainment in art and design on entry is mixed but pupils quickly make progress and achievement is good because good teaching and well-planned and structured lessons ensure that basic art and design skills are established and built on during Years 7, 8 and 9. Boys achieve well but girls achieve even better. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make similar progress to other pupils. All pupils are well trained in the use of sketchbooks as an essential tool for recording images and information, developing ideas, trying out techniques and producing final ideas for work. Work is presented to a high standard. They are able to use a range of techniques including pencil line and tone, mark making, pencil colour, watercolour, collage and combinations of these. Drawing from observation is well established in higher attaining pupils, less so in other pupils but they have other techniques for recording ideas and images. They can use construction techniques in card and ceramics. Most work is produced with care and attention to the quality of the finish. For example, Year 9 pupils produce ambitious ceramic sculptures based on the development of studies of packaging. They are well executed, despite complex shapes with difficult construction problems, and finished to a high standard. Pupils' ability to make a personal response to a theme or idea is not as well developed as their technical skills.

134. During Years 10 and 11 pupils' achievement is very good so that by the end of Year 11, the standard of pupils' work is well above average. Pupils use sketchbooks very well, both in school and at home. They develop, refine and modify ideas and produce technically proficient pieces of work. All pupils relate their work to that of artists and to other cultures. For example, a pupil designs and produces a teapot that combines the influence of her study of the ceramics of ancient Peru with studies of natural materials such as leaves and twigs. Collage, pastel and mixed media are

well used. Pupils are able to sustain studies over extended periods. Some designs are realised in large-scale constructions in carton card and other materials. Pupils make personal responses and bring their interests into their work. Pupils are well supported by the planned art and design course that enables all pupils to achieve well. Projects are planned which are structured well enough to support weaker pupils, while being sufficiently open to allow higher attaining pupils to develop personal and expressive work to a high technical standard.

135. Boys and girls achieve similarly well. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Higher attaining pupils make extensive use of sketchbooks to collect visual and written information and to experiment with ideas and techniques. Their work shows well-developed drawing skills, a high quality of presentation and inventive use of materials. Pupils' evaluations are insightful and meaningful. In other pupils' work, where drawing is not so well developed, pupils have other effective means of recording images and developing ideas. An average pupil uses pastel, collage, tear sheets and mixed media to study and develop ideas and bold graphic work results from the extended studies.

136. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7, 8, and 9 is good. In two lessons seen it was very good. In one lesson it was unsatisfactory. Teachers plan work that interests and motivates pupils. They use a variety of teaching styles, including whole class teaching, helping groups of pupils and individual support and instruction, so that all pupils make good progress over the course of a lesson. In a Year 9 lesson on the work of Pop artists, the teacher leads a discussion with pupils gathered around high quality visual aids and her own work to set the high standards she expects. Pupils work with great concentration, colour mixing to match sweet wrappers. Boys and girls achieve similarly high standards. Well-planned lessons break larger and more complex tasks into smaller steps, which are taught so that pupils acquire skills and build on previous learning. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and match factual material well to the age and development of pupils so that, for example, they build an understanding of the meaning and significance of artists' work. However, planning does not allow sufficient opportunity for pupils' individual personal response and prescribes what the pupils will produce too closely. In the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, lesson aims were not sufficiently focused and pupils were unclear what they were doing resulting in a lack concentration and poor progress.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11. It was very good in the majority of lessons seen and never less than satisfactory. Teachers use well-chosen and good quality visual aids, including their own work and that of other pupils, to instruct, challenge and inspire pupils so that they have high expectations of their own work and what they are capable of. They demonstrate techniques well so that pupils understand the processes involved and are inspired and motivated by seeing their teacher as a skilled practitioner. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the teacher had a well-prepared series of his own drawings to show the stages of building a pastel portrait. Though initially lacking in confidence, pupils went on to make a sound start to the task, inspired by the example and learning from the demonstration provided by the teacher.

138. Leadership and management of the subject are good and reflect the success of the subject. Assessment of pupils' work makes a strong contribution to their progress, as does the information about courses and progress sent to parents, which helps them become involved in their child's learning. Very careful planning of the art and design courses ensures that all pupils experience success in art and design, regardless of their previous experiences. The opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development are not sufficiently planned. Though there are examples, in some year groups, of good work being produced using ICT, the National Curriculum requirements for all pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not being met.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching that interests and motivates pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Examination results have improved significantly.
- Teachers and other staff work well together for the benefit of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation needs updating.
- The provision of ICT to meet statutory requirements.
- The course for pupils between Years 7 and 9 needs to be reviewed to meet statutory requirements and provide a common experience for pupils. Currently pupils do not all cover the same modules of work.
- The poorer performance of boys relative to girls in Key Stage 3.

139. Pupils enter school with below average standards. Achievement is good. By the end of Year 9 standards are in line with national average. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve standards that are slightly above national average. There are differences in the performance of boys and girls. Boys produce poorer quality written work to support their designing and making. When pupils are grouped according to prior performance in the subject, the higher attaining groups comprise mainly of girls. Twenty-one out of twenty-seven in the top set Year 9 are girls, whilst there are more lower attaining pupils who are boys. In Year 10 & Year 11 where pupils are grouped according to their option choices and not according to ability, gender differences are less apparent by the end of the key stage.

140. In Years 7 to 9, pupils of all abilities develop a sound understanding of the design process by working with a very good range of materials in a variety of situations to solve design problems. They are able to build on this knowledge when they progress into Key Stage 4. For example, Year 9 pupils working in pairs use kits to design and build a circuit for a timing device to use when cleaning their teeth. In Year 10 pupils work independently on prototype boards to see how they can alter the behaviour of a circuit linked to a buzzer by varying the value of the resistance. Pupils display good creative skills in all materials. In textiles for example Year 8 pupils make eye-catching banners, which often have, themes linked to other subjects and which are displayed around the school. Pupils in resistant materials use reclaimed wood to build siege machines capable of firing a missile a fixed distance.

141. In Years 10 and 11 there is a much better balance between the elements of designing and making than was seen in the last inspection. Practical outcomes are at least satisfactory and a significant number are good particularly those produced in food. Graphical skills have improved since the appointment of a new teacher and some original designs by Year 10 pupils for carrier bags were seen. Currently pupils are not able to make sufficient use of ICT, including computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing, to develop their knowledge and understanding. This has a detrimental impact on standards. Pupils have sufficiently well developed numeracy and literacy skills to enable them to communicate their design ideas and to carry them out successfully. Progress and achievement are good for pupils with special educational needs because they are well supported.

142. GCSE examination results have improved steadily over a number of years. In 2000 the number of pupils achieving grades A*-C and A*-G was below the national average. Girls' performance was marginally better than in their other subjects and boys' performance was slightly below that in their other subjects. In 2001 the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C and A*-G has risen above the average for 2000. Results in resistant materials appear to be lower than in the other material areas but the intake was of a lower ability and, when value added data is taken into account, these pupils achieved well.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. More than half the teaching seen was at least good or better. There is no difference in the standard of teaching between the two key stages. The teachers are all subject specialists who communicate well with their pupils. Relationships

between teachers and pupils are good and lead to pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and learning. Lessons are planned to cater for the varying needs of all pupils and pupils receive appropriate individual help and feedback on their progress in lessons. Practical skills are well demonstrated and this enables pupils to work safely and to recognise what constitutes quality work. Teachers promote the use of technical vocabulary, which encourages pupils to use it confidently. A few lessons however did not move at a sufficiently brisk pace or offer sufficient challenge, and instances were observed when pupils were held back because they had to wait for everyone to complete a task before moving on. In the best lessons the teacher had completed very detailed planning and the lesson moved at a brisk pace with pupils making rapid gains in knowledge and understanding.

144. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. A new head of department has been in post for two terms following a time of difficulty. Together with the staff, some newly appointed, she has instigated improvement. The development plan identifies appropriate targets to raise standards and which reflects the aims of the school. There remain issues that still need to be resolved. The current course for pupils in Key Stage 3 does not meet statutory requirements and not all pupils have a common experience. The current arrangements have created some large groups, which cannot safely be taught in the present unsatisfactory accommodation, which needs updating to provide for modern courses in this subject. The provision of ICT within the subject is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements. Although resources generally are adequate there is some shortfall in the provision of tools and materials for resistant materials and graphics. Although assessment procedures are rigorous and effective scope exists to develop a better system of record keeping. Technician support is an asset to the department by ensuring that resources are well-organised and routine tasks carried out efficiently.

145. Since the last inspection satisfactory improvement has taken place. Standards have improved with a better balance being achieved between designing and making. Staffing changes have resulted in (better provision for pupils regarding) wider options for pupils in the material areas although this year it has not been possible to offer GCSE textiles except as an extra curricular activity.

Child development

146. Standards are good. In 2000 GCSE results for pupils achieving grades A*-C were above the national average but below it for pupils gaining A*-G. One pupil achieved one of the highest marks in the country and received a letter of commendation from the examination board. In 2001 there were a lower number of entries. Results for pupils gaining A*-C were lower than the previous year but remain above the average for 2000. All pupils achieved a grade in the range A*-G. In the work seen achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching. Pupils in Year 10 were observed discussing elements of pre-conceptual care prior to producing a leaflet. The quality of the discussion was outstanding. Pupils demonstrated detailed subject knowledge and an ability to apply this to the task in hand. Year 11 pupils in a lesson on toys were able to link specific toys to different

areas of development and for particular age groups. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils work hard and enjoy the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Teaching is good, and at times is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department.

147. Standards overall match the national average. As at the time of the last inspection, by end of Year 9 pupils achieve levels which match national averages. The results of the National Curriculum statutory tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 matched the average. Similar standards were achieved in the 2001 results and were reflected in the work of pupils seen during the inspection. Standards are also average at the end of Year 11. This is shown in pupils' work and in GCSE results. Attainment at the higher grades of GCSE A*-C were above average in 2000 and similar standards were achieved in 2001 with a higher percentage of pupils reaching the highest grades of A* and A. Attainment at grades A*-G however, was below average. GCSE results are now better than at the time of the last inspection especially at the higher grades.

148. When compared with pupils' previous attainment at the end of Year 9, the results achieved at GCSE represent good achievement, by both boys and girls. Pupils also achieve well in Years 7 to 9 in comparison with their standards on entry to the school. Higher attaining pupils achieve especially well as shown in the above average percentage gaining the higher grades at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs and the single pupil observed with English as an additional language, achieve as well as other pupils. They make good progress in lessons especially when supported by Learning Support Assistants.

149. There are particular strengths in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and impact of physical processes, environmental issues, places and factors influencing the growth of settlements and use of land. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson pupils had no difficulty in discussing in depth the reasons for desertification and its impact on the terrain and the quality of human life. They understood clearly the current changes in climate which are resulting in worsening conditions in desert regions. Similarly in Year 10, pupils demonstrated good understanding of the causes of earthquakes, discussing and explaining plate movement, and the difficulty of predicting the occurrence of earthquakes, from a sound knowledge base.

150. Pupils also make good progress in the development of a range of geographical skills. The development of investigative skills is particularly strong and

benefits from the increasing use of ICT. Pupils are confident in their use of computers and readily access the Internet to find information. This was shown particularly well in a Year 10 lesson when pupils used their good ICT skills very effectively to investigate the 1922 Tokyo earthquake. Higher attaining pupils especially, develop very good independent research skills. This is particularly evident in examination course work together with well researched surveys into for example, factors influencing the growth of settlements and use of land. Map work is generally good and diagrams and tables are mostly clear and well presented. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well in the presentation and analysis of information and data. Sound factual knowledge of topics, standards of presentation, and levels of detail, explanation and understanding are much more variable in the work of average and lower attaining pupils.

151. Pupils respond well to good teaching. They work hard, concentrate well and learn effectively. Many average attaining pupils however are compliant rather than avid learners with some in Year 11 especially, lacking strong motivation. Behaviour is good overall and at times excellent.

152. Pupils' good achievement is well supported by the good teaching, which has been sustained since the last inspection. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all of the eight lessons observed during the inspection. In three of these it was good, in two very good and in one it was excellent. Where teaching is strongest, pupils' interest and attention are aroused and sustained by lively and enthusiastic presentations and a challenging pace of learning. In a Year 7 lesson for instance, a stimulating introduction, followed by a series of challenging and imaginative tasks, helped pupils to make excellent progress in the identification of characteristics of shanty towns in India. There is generally a strong focus on the development of geographical skills and an insistence that pupils should work accurately as geographers. Lessons are well planned to this end, and homework provides opportunities for the extension of class work. Pupils' learning requirements are well known, and their understanding checked and developed through well targeted individual tuition in the great majority of lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of individual education plans being used to guide planning, and effective support by Learning Support Assistants.

153. Resources are used well. An outstanding example of this was the very good use made of a video in a Year 10 lesson on the impact of earthquakes. Pupils watched with rapt attention and took notes conscientiously. This lesson proved to be a profoundly moving experience for them, and one which made a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as to the development of their geographical knowledge and understanding.

154. Behaviour management is nearly always skilled and contributes strongly to the very good learning atmosphere which characterises the great majority of lessons. Only very occasionally is class control less effective. In one lesson this was because pupils were not settled to work purposefully from the beginning. Learning was delayed by a series of distractions which resulted in on-going and increasing behavioural problems throughout the lesson.

155. Pupils' work is marked regularly and most marking help pupils to improve their standards. However the procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress over time, and for setting targets for improvement are not sufficiently systematic and rigorous especially at Key Stage 3. This was identified as a priority for improvement at the time of the last inspection and while a target in the department development plan, still has not been rectified.

156. In other respects good progress has been made since the last inspection. The good leadership and management of the department has ensured continuing strengths in teaching and provision. Teachers, and especially those who are newly appointed, are very well supported. Development planning is clearly focused on key priorities but the achievement of these is not sufficiently well supported by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Systems for this purpose, and for the monitoring of the work of the department as a whole, need to be developed to strengthen the basis for further improvement in the provision for geography.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- The use of ICT enables pupils to collect, group, re-arrange and link information, and in so doing reinforce their understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported.
- Good attitudes and relationships between teachers and pupils support a mature working atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 does not involve them or enable them to take responsibility for their progress.
- Assessment does not yet enable teachers and pupils to judge progress in the individual key skills of history.
- Resources, including opportunities for library research and more effective use of video material.

157. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 indicate standards in line with the national average in 2001. Work seen during the inspection would support this assessment. Assessments for the previous year are not available. Girls are achieving a higher proportion of the highest grades than the boys. Results in the GCSE history examination in 2000 were well below the national average for grades A*-C, but in line with the national average for grades A*-G. Results for 2001 have declined further at grades A*-C, however the proportion of pupils achieving a grade A*-G has risen. There has been a clear downward trend over the last four years in the results for girls, while the results for boys have remained fairly constant.

158. Work seen during the inspection shows that the standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are average. By Year 9 pupils use source material to select and extract relevant information, and higher attaining pupils are beginning to question the reliability of the sources. With support, they consider the question of purpose and the authorship of the source. In their investigation into children's working conditions in factories they recognised the problem of bias, and in composing letters from factory owners, pupils demonstrated that they were aware of more than one view of history. During their investigation into Quarry Bank Mill, pupils made simple hypothesis, for example as to the reasons for the success of the mill. Higher attaining pupils are able to make links between different aspects of such events as the growth of towns, and to evaluate the significance of the contributory factors. Most pupils require considerable teacher direction to do so. Pupils do not readily make independent judgements, relying on their teachers for information or the textbook. Information is taken at its face value and there is little evidence of questioning.

159. The standard reached by pupils following the GCSE course is average in work seen during the inspection. Pupils use a range of sources to gain information regarding the past. They readily identify primary and secondary sources although on

occasion their understanding is restricted by unfamiliar vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils suggest motive and are able to compare their sources with others in order to identify changes in attitude over time. A good example is the work on changing attitudes to the 1st World War as seen through a series of cartoons. All pupils identify the changing attitudes but fewer are able to give detailed reasons for the changes. Pupils have a good understanding of the events at the outbreak of the 1st World War and the significant battles of Gallipolis and the Somme. Pupils are able to identify reasons for successes and failures and higher attaining pupils can make links between them. They consider the long and short term causes of the war and its contribution to the fall of the Russian Czar. Higher attaining pupils write extended essays that demonstrate balanced arguments, reaching judgements that are supported with evidence. Pupils consider the development of the role of government in improving the conditions of the poor in Britain at the turn of the 20th century, and are able to view the reforms through the range of political opinions of the time.

160. Pupils' achievement at in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils gain a sound understanding of the periods they study and can present clear responses orally and in writing. Their interest is particularly marked when they have the opportunity to present their findings using Information and Communication Technology. At times they do not strive to improve the level of their responses, but are content to offer a minimal explanation. Written work is often well presented and attractive, however it is at times marred by poor handwriting skills, particularly by boys. The achievement of pupils following the GCSE course is satisfactory. Pupils complete tasks but often the emphasis is upon completion and simple factual knowledge. Unless clearly directed, some pupils do not consider analysis, or enquire further. This lack of determination affects the achievement of pupils. In some groups pupils are willing to depend on the work of others and boys tend to be less involved. The pace of learning is generally steady but lacking a sense of urgency. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress at both key stages, supported by clear task sheets and additional help.

161. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge base and are able to respond well to pupils' enquiries. Lessons are well planned and usually include a brief review of the previous lesson that enables pupils to build upon prior learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and this supports the development of a busy working atmosphere. Where teaching is excellent the teacher provides clear tasks that are planned to move the understanding of pupils forward in clear stages. A good example was the lesson in Year 9 when using ICT pupils gathered information about the causes of change in the Industrial Revolution, grouped it under aspect and then linked the issues. Higher attaining pupils were able to move on to evaluate what they had learned. The newly opened humanities computer room makes a valuable contribution to learning and teachers use it enthusiastically to enable pupils to develop their own presentations and undertake research. Learning is restricted when there is a lack of clarity over instructions, or when the teachers' expectations of the pace of pupils' efforts are too low. The black and white photocopied information sheets used have less impact upon pupils than books and at times limit the research and understanding of pupils. Lower attaining pupils find some vocabulary and text of source material difficult, and at times the presentation of pre-prepared information sheets are at an inappropriate

level for them. The department is introducing exercises to support the development of pupils' vocabulary, and emphasis is placed upon the understanding of key words and concepts such as 'imperialism' and 'industrialisation'. Teachers emphasise the use of information, and group work enables pupils to discuss issues and to learn from each other. The department has one small portable television. As a result, the detail and impact of the excellent video footage available is often lost. Teachers use the available overhead projector well to involve pupils in the development of ideas. However, the need to share it between all the history teachers means that it is not generally available.

162. The leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers work as a team and evaluate the effects of their teaching, sharing ideas and good practice. The department has put in place a training programme that will support the development of teaching, and is contributing to the improvement in standards this year. The use of the new ICT room is enabling teachers to focus on the use of information rather than just its collection in order to encourage pupils to analyse information. Schemes of work have been reviewed for the GCSE course, and a system of assessment tasks has been introduced that will enable the department to monitor progress over time in the key elements in Years 7 to 9. There has previously been limited use of National Curriculum levels, and pupils are not yet involved in their own assessment. Assessment and monitoring of pupils following the GCSE course is well developed and the annual review of results is detailed and enables the department to reflect upon its work. Some GCSE classes are taught in three different classrooms, some of which are not history rooms and so have no history display, and require resources to be carried across the school. This limits the learning for these pupils and reduces communication between those teachers. There is a useful range of books in the library. However many books are included that would be unlikely to be used and would not encourage a pupil to browse. The detailed department handbook reflects the aims of the department to teach not only history but whole school issues. Support for the literacy and ICT skills of pupils is developing, however the development of numeracy skills has not yet been tackled. The department makes a good contribution to the moral and social development of the pupils, considering issues such as child labour in 19th century, and the slave trade.

163. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and the expectations of teachers are generally appropriately high. Attitudes and relationships between teachers and pupils have remained good. Assessment using National Curriculum levels has been introduced, however, it is still under-developed. Following an unsettled period the department is well placed to move forward.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- The good progress made by pupils.

- The use of resources, particularly:
 - computers to support learning
 - the extensive range of high quality reference guides produced by the school
 - the very good in-class support to pupils provided by technicians

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met for all pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Disseminate the extensive existing good practice to all teachers.

164. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average in Years 7 to 9 and average in Years 10 and 11. These standards are achieved because teaching is good. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 7 are good. Pupils' attitudes and the use of resources also cause the quality of pupils' learning in ICT to be good. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and those who take GCSE or GNVQ continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils who do not take a public examination in ICT at the end of Year 11 do not make good progress.

165. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 with a wide range of levels of achievement in ICT. However, a much higher proportion of pupils have low levels of achievement than is found nationally and a surprisingly high proportion have had very little experience of computers in their primary schools. Some pupils, especially those with computers at home, have reached levels above those expected by the age of 11.

166. In the first three years of the school, all pupils follow a course which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. By the end of Year 9, standards, as assessed by their teachers, are below the national average. However, these standards are closer to the national average than they were at the age of 11 and so pupils make good progress in the first three years of the school. By the age of 14, some pupils have reached the very highest levels seen at this age.

167. Progress in lessons is good because teaching is good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in four out of five lessons observed during the inspection and was good in two of these. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Good teaching proceeds at a lively pace. Pupils move on to new learning as soon as one learning objective is secure so time is not wasted on unnecessary repetition or low-level tasks such as data entry. An excellent series of high-quality reference booklets has been produced by the school. These booklets are accessible to learners of all ages and have also been well used by adults. Vocabulary has, generally, been carefully selected so that pupils can readily read the materials. Pupils make regular reference to these booklets in lessons, so increasing their independence as learners.

168. Teachers make good use of computers in their teaching. Not only does this ensure a high level of presentation but reinforces pupils' awareness of the applications of the subject. A very good example is the identifying the lesson aims at the beginning of lessons which are then reviewed to evaluate the learning as the lesson closes. The use of ICT greatly facilitates this process.

169. A very important contributor to the progress made by pupils is the excellent use made of the two ICT technicians. In addition to ensuring that equipment is working well, they are very well integrated into the teaching of the lesson. For example, they display slides illustrating the teacher's input. This allows the teacher to interact fully with the class, without the distraction of operating equipment. Their greatest value is the very high level of teaching support they provide, answering pupils' questions. The head of the department has trained these technicians very well so that they do not make inappropriate contributions such as doing the work for the pupils.

170. Another feature of the best teaching is relating the work to the National Curriculum levels. The marking of work includes the level at which pupils are currently performing together with a clear indication of what is required to reach the next level. A very good example was observed in a Year 9 lesson on designing a web page, when the teacher indicated what work was required for each level. This gave pupils an immediate assessment of their work and what else they should include.

171. Throughout the school, the best teaching places great emphasis on acquiring skills and understanding rather than on the completion of tasks so making the best use of the time available. Strong emphasis is given to developing evaluation skills. Pupils compare, objectively, differing forms of information and their communication. This process of evaluation involves very high levels of reflection and so makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils. Their ability to express evaluations, both verbally and in writing is high and so the subject contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy. At the time of the previous inspection, only pupils of high levels of attainment demonstrated this capability. A much wider range now shows this skill and so this constitutes improvement since that time.

172. For Years 10 and 11, pupils may opt to follow a course leading to GCSE in Information Technology. Pupils not taking this option use ICT in other subjects. Pupils who do not follow the GCSE course are not guaranteed to receive their full entitlement to ICT under the National Curriculum. The school has plans to remedy this problem from September 2002.

173. In 2000, GCSE results in Information Technology were at the national average. Hence, from the end of Year 9, the good progress sustains that made in the first three years. Results for Information Technology for the year 2001 were subject to appeal at the time of the inspection. At no age is there a significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls.

174. As in Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching was good or better in three quarters of lessons observed and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen to Years 10 and 11. All the features of good teaching seen in the first three years are present for the older classes. These are enhanced by an increased focus on independent learning. Very good use was made of anecdote to make difficult, theoretical points meaningful to pupils. A good example was the illustration to a Year 10 class of data validation with a story about misreading gas meters. This

story amused the class and brought home to them the importance of validation checks. Good use is also made of analogy to aid understanding such as when a traditional filing system was demonstrated to Year 10 pupils to illustrate the construction of a database.

175. One group in Year 10 has more pupils than there are computers in any of the computer rooms. Consequently, the group is allocated two, neighbouring rooms. Whilst the presence of a technician throughout the lesson ensures no lack of adult supervision, considerably greater demands are placed upon the teacher by this arrangement, attempting to ensure that the needs of all are equally met. As a result, learning does not progress as rapidly as in classes where all pupils are in the same room and these pupils were not developing their ability to take responsibility for their own learning to the same extent as occurs in other groups.

176. Throughout Years 7 to 11 pupils display positive attitudes towards ICT. They enjoy working with computers. This was exemplified by the delight displayed by a girl with special educational needs in Year 7 on successfully sending and receiving her first e-mails. Only when teaching lacks direction and pace do pupils lose concentration, for example by using other programs on the computer.

177. Good usage is made of the computer rooms at lunch time and after school. Large numbers of pupils spend their mid-day break continuing with work started in ICT classes, conducting research on the internet or preparing work for other subjects and for leisure purposes. An excellent new provision in the school is the intermediate GNVQ ICT course offered to pupils from Year 9 upwards. This is taken by them in after school sessions. In the first year, pass rates of those choosing to complete the course in a single year were above the national average. Pupils as young as 14 gained distinctions which are at GCSE grade C standard. This course is excellently resourced and makes an enormous contribution to the development of pupils as independent learners. The technician taking the course alongside pupils provides a superb role model.

178. Very good use is made of the internet and the school's intranet. Appropriate parental permission is required before a pupil is allowed to access the internet.

179. Pupils with special educational needs make progress equal to that of other pupils. Occasionally, learning support assistants help such pupils in class, for example, helping with reading. These staff offer wider support as appropriate.

180. The subject is well led by the head of department. He is very knowledgeable about current developments in the subject. He places important emphasis on developing an understanding of information and its communication, giving proper perspective to the use of computers. He makes good use of analysis of assessment to inform his planning, integrating smoothly with the school development plan. He has played a key role in the training of other staff in the use of ICT and his excellent management of the ICT technicians makes a very positive impact on raising standards.

181. ICT is well used in some other subjects. One example was the very good learning being made by low achievers in science in Year 11 using a computer simulation. In biology students make extensive use of computers through data logging. Pupils in French make regular use of a program in which they can test their pronunciation against native speakers on an individual basis. In music, pupils use software to assist them with composition. Research using the internet is undertaken in religious studies and history. Spreadsheet skills are developed in mathematics. In English, pupils consider the impact of technology. Whilst the school has a more favourable ratio of computers to pupils than is found nationally, some subjects, including design and technology and art and design report difficulties in accessing computers and this is having a detrimental effect on standards.

182. Staff training under the New Opportunities Funding is progressing. Although some teachers are just commencing their training, many speak highly of the benefits

183. In addition to the improvements identified above, standards have risen since the previous inspection, the very good GNVQ course has been added to complement the curriculum provision and greater use is being made of ICT in other subjects. This constitutes a good improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Positive attitudes as a result of good teaching.
- Good departmental leadership
- Improving GCSE results compare well with most other school subjects
- Rich extra-curricular provision for languages

Areas for improvement

- Ensure more natural and spontaneous use of the foreign language in and outside the classroom.
- Extend and amplify the use of ICT in language lessons.

184. Attainment in recent years in the GCSE examinations has fluctuated considerably but the underlying trend is upwards. French has produced better results in the upper range than German. Both languages performed very well when taken by small numbers of higher ability pupils as a second language.

185. In 2000 French was very close to the national average. It compared very favourably to most other subjects in the school. The 2001 results however, where German was the major language, were disappointing and well below the French standard of the year before. The girls outperformed the boys in line with national gender differences.

186. The department has a minority share of the French A-level teaching within the Chetwynd consortium. In the last few years results have not been good with very few grades being achieved in the top A-B band. There is no school input into German A-level teaching at all.

187. Attainment toward the end of Year 9 in French is around the national average. The virtually exclusive use of the foreign language means that listening and speaking skills are developing well although many do not use it naturally when asking teachers for information or when communicating with fellow pupils. Most pupils are quite adept at turning questions into answers in the frequent dialogue practice sessions at the outset and conclusion of lessons. As they start Year 10 many are quite ambitious in what they can say and write in short sentences. Due emphasis is placed on grammatical accuracy. Marked work sometimes includes an indication on the National Curriculum levels being reached. German, now the second language, does not reach that level as it now starts two years after French. Small groups of higher ability pupils however, make very good progress in the two years before GCSE and thus the gap is closed.

188. Attainment in French is close to the national average at the end of Year 11. Teachers continue to insist on good standards in punctuation, spelling and grammar. This not only puts language learning on a sound basis but it makes a significant contribution to improving literacy in the school. The confidence gained in earlier years in recognising and manipulating French patterns and structures leads to some very good extended writing on a range of rehearsed topics. Average and higher ability pupils also show good confidence in speaking but lower ability pupils speak with some hesitation and uncertainty. Pupils did not make independent use of the good supply of classroom dictionaries in inspection week but the well thumbed volumes are evidence of frequent use. In a Year 13 class students were able to hold brief discussions in fairly fluent French with few errors and were clearly keen linguists. Pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress in listening and speaking but no learning support assistants were seen in operation.

189. The quality of teaching was good and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Pupils often make good progress in lessons thanks to good teaching. Progress over time is more variable for the lower attainers. These pupils need much repetition and reinforcement and consequently their progress is slower. Pupils work hard because teachers set and sustain pace and challenge in lessons so that available classtime

is fully utilised. Tasks and activities are carefully timed to keep the lesson moving productively. Teachers expect sustained effort from their pupils and usually obtain it. The sharing of aims at the beginning of the lesson and a quickfire check on learning at the end promotes a sense of pride in what has been achieved. Occasionally, inadequate explanation at the outset or errors in the timing of tasks can make the odd lesson less effective. Experienced teachers know how to handle difficult pupils which means minimum disruption to classes. Boys in particular enjoy using the well equipped MFL computer room although excessive warmth in the room can affect concentration levels.

190. Subject leadership is effective. Staff changes have been well-managed and newly qualified teachers benefit from a thorough induction programme. Schemes of work have been overhauled to correspond with National Curriculum requirements. Teachers share a common methodology and supply teachers are well prepared and guided for their lessons so that pupils are not disadvantaged. The subject handbook is clear and well laid out. The extracurricular provision of visits to cinemas/theatres, lunchtime language clubs and visits/exchanges is particularly good. Carefully recorded assessment data enables pupils' achievements to be charted in speaking, listening, reading and writing and shows where change or modification would benefit pupils. Library provision is reasonable on reference books but the stock of background books and foreign language readers is only adequate.

191. Since the previous inspection the department has improved its GCSE examination results but A-level results have remained static. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have more confidence now in their oral skills and standards in writing have risen. Pupils' progress is more carefully monitored and they participate more readily in lessons. Tasks and learning activities are more sharply focused. Planning is better and the department is now able to function as an effective team. The changes in the curriculum reflect the strengths and expertise of the departmental staff. The department is well placed to continue its improvement.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- Good standards of teaching and learning that generate enthusiasm for music.
- Pupils achieving well and improved GCSE results.
- An increased range of well-supported extra musical activities.

Areas for improvement

- The incorporation of facilities for ICT to support the development of musical skills.
- Better practice facilities that allow pupils to work independently, efficiently and undisturbed by others.
- Further development of higher practical skills.

192. Since the previous inspection standards in music have improved throughout the school. By the end of Year 9 they now match the expectations of the National Curriculum for most pupils. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Pupils use a good range of instruments to express their musical ideas in ensembles that combine melodies with other rhythmic and percussion parts. They improvise and perform short pieces and their own compositions with some confidence.

193. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection. Results in 2000 matched the national subject averages for A*-C grades and those in 2001 were similar. Pupils display a very wide range of performing skills. Relatively few perform instruments beyond about grades 4-5 (Associated Board). Most have developed their performing skills entirely from what they have learned in class lessons with keyboards and a range of percussion instruments. Compositions are mainly improvised and those heard during the inspection showed a good variety of instrumental and vocal interests. The weakest areas in pupils' musicianship are in their aural skills and technical knowledge. The planned increase in facilities for ICT is one of the ways in which the department is tackling this aspect.

194. A few pupils proceed to A-level courses jointly with some from other schools and are taught at a separate centre. At the time of the inspection, they were taught by teachers from elsewhere and their work was not sampled. There were too few candidates each year to make realistic national comparisons. All those entered over the last three years gained a grade.

195. Considering their starting points, pupils by the end of Year 9 achieve well because of good standards of teaching and learning that generate enthusiasm for music. One of the effects of this is that many more pupils choose to pursue GCSE music now than at the time of the previous inspection. Lessons throughout Years 7 to 9 focus strongly on developing simple musicianship skills that enable pupils to communicate through performing and understand how to refine basic musical ideas when improvising. Pupils behave well and relationships with teachers are good. They are keen to improve their work and enjoy performing to each other. This was apparent in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher skilfully combined all the various instrumental parts of a Cakewalk that pupils had been practising. The more musically talented pupils added syncopated melodic parts and those with special educational needs participated fully. The whole performance was recorded.

196. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are carefully structured to allow time for pupils to practise individually and collaboratively. There are well-established routines for this and pupils have acquired good practice habits. They enjoy being creative and treat instruments with due care. The effectiveness of these procedures, however, is restricted by the nature of the accommodation. The quality of learning in some of the lessons observed was somewhat diminished by the lack of designated practice areas/rooms and the time lost in moving instruments around. This was apparent in one large GCSE class where pupils were unable to practise undisturbed. The one and only practice room is rarely available because of the large numbers of pupils having extra instrumental lessons from visiting specialists. It is not large enough for even small groups of pupils with instruments.

197. Provision for extra instrumental tuition is good. At the time of the inspection nine visiting specialist teachers give lessons on a broad range of instruments. Nearly 100 pupils have lessons each week. The music department is keen to encourage the development of higher practical skills through this scheme.

198. This busy department is well managed and efficiently run. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection. Schemes of work and assessment procedures have been improved and new classroom instruments have been purchased. The new purpose-built music suite is a significant improvement, although limited in overall space when considering the scope of music making in the school. A varied range of extra musical activities has been established for pupils of all levels of ability and inclination. Groups like the choir, guitar groups, wind ensemble and dance club are all enthusiastically supported. There is an ongoing programme of concerts and musicals each year. During the week of the inspection auditions for Grease were enthusiastically getting under way. The climate for music making is healthy!

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall good standard of teaching.
- Positive attitudes of pupils and students.
- Strengths in leadership and organisation.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of progress at regular intervals throughout the 5 year programme to provide pupils and parents with more detailed information.

199. GCSE results in the year 2000 were above the national average for A*-C grades and above the school's, and the national, all-subject average. All entrants achieved grades in the A*-G grade range and boys performed better than girls. Over the previous 3 years the trend has been upwards though in 2001 results in physical education fell below the 2000 results.

200. In the sixth-form, A level results for year 2000 were above the schools average with above average points score though in 2001 results at this level were much lower and very few candidates completed the course. At AS level in 2001 the overall results are good.

201. Attainment on entry is variable as is the pupils' prior experience in the subject. Overall it is deemed to be below average, in line with the whole school standard. This is partly confirmed by some of the work seen from the current Year 7 pupils. Whilst levels of personal fitness are sound, ball skills and general standards of co-ordination, speed and strength are not well developed. There are, however, several activities where progress is already being made and the majority of pupils are achieving well in boys basketball and girls gymnastics. By the end of Year 9 overall standards of attainment are nearing average. Physical fitness standards are good, games skills are much better developed and almost all pupils have a better knowledge and understanding of the principles of physical fitness and of how to improve and sustain standards of personal fitness. This improvement has been achieved by a combination of good teaching and positive pupil attitudes towards the subject. These characteristics continue in Years 10 and 11 and this ensures that by the time pupils leave the school many have reached average levels of attainment and some have exceeded these standards.

202. In all years higher attainers in individual sports and in team games compete successfully in local and regional representative events. The standard of work seen in the sixth form, at A-level, is good both in theory and practical lessons. The overall quality of teaching at this level is very good and as a result, in line with AS level results, all students are achieving well.

203. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school in physical education and especially those in the earlier years 7, 8 and 9. Success in

physical tasks helps raise their self-confidence which in turn aids them in making further progress.

204. In all years most pupils and students display a positive approach to the subject both in lessons and in the extensive programme of extra-curricular sports and games provided by the department. Almost all behave well and have a clear understanding of what the teachers expect of them in terms of behaviour as well as performance. The commitment to the subject can be seen for example in younger pupils through the very high standards of personal kit. This also indicates clearly the support from parents to the work of the department. Older students are also very well engaged in their work and eager to do well.

205. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This accounts for the improvement in standards over five years. All teachers know their subject well and especially at sixth form level. They are most able in devising and then managing activities that promote improvement. This feature above all ensures that pupils know what to do in order to improve and subsequently the encouraging style and sensitive feedback from teachers informs them how well they are doing. Lessons are well planned and most conform well to the established department pattern. Pupils are engaged in physically challenging warming-up sessions and some of these are well led by the pupils themselves. Most classes are well managed and there are generally good relationships both amongst the pupils in physical education and between pupils and staff.

206. The department benefits from the good leadership provided by a hard-working capable and committed head of department. Improvements since the last inspection have been achieved through good teaching and the planned development of a responsive programme designed to meet the needs of pupils and students. Currently the programme offers all pupils the opportunity to gain some form of accreditation at the end of Year 11. More emphasis is placed on physical fitness and increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of how it can be improved and sustained. Arrangements for assessments are much improved and the department has already begun to develop further the programme designed to provide pupils and parents with more details about the progress being made in physical education. The information gathered will aid the department in judging the overall effectiveness of its programme and, in particular, the quality of teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Appointment of a second specialist.
- Introduction of the short course GCSE.
- Management of the department
- Support for pupils with special educational needs

Areas for improvement

- Limited opportunity for pupils to develop their own values and opinions.
- Insufficient understanding by pupils of the effect of belief on the lives of believers.
- Attitudes of a significant minority of pupils in all years.
- Provision of religious education for the sixth form.

207. Results of the short course GCSE examination in 2000 were above the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C, and A*-G. In 1999 and 2000, every pupil entered achieved at least a pass. Results have remained fairly constant over the three years that the examination has been offered to pupils. Girls are achieving a higher proportion of the A*-C grades than the boys. A further eight pupils successfully achieved the Certificate of Achievement in Religious Education.

208. Standards for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are average, and in line with the standards expected by the 'Agreed Syllabus'. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the key features of the faiths studied and consider the Rites of Passage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their understanding of the effect of belief on the believer is weaker however, and they do not readily consider what it means to have a religious belief. Pupils study a range of religious symbols and artefacts, but their responses are generally restricted to factual knowledge. In their work on 'Faith in Action' pupils demonstrate greater understanding of the effect of faith. Their study of the wedding ceremony and the Nativity is generally restricted to factual information attractively presented. Pupils do not appear to consider the significance of the events, although a good example of doing so was in their recognition of the importance of the Bar Mitzvah to a young Jewish boy.

209. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the short course in religious education unless they have been withdrawn by their parents, In work seen during the inspection the majority of pupils achieved levels of attainment in line with the average expectations for the course. A significant minority of pupils who display poor attitudes towards their lessons are achieving below average standards. Pupils consider topical moral issues such as the role of marriage, divorce and abortion. They record the main arguments put forward by different groups. However, although they identify the religious stance they do not appear to reflect upon its validity. A good example of where they did was a class where pupils considered the nature of suffering and demonstrated good understanding of the nature of God as all powerful yet allowing free will. They were able to consider different viewpoints and reflect upon the effect of suffering on individuals. Pupils do not readily re-call information from previous years and their familiarity with the biblical structure is weak. Pupils focus on the topic of the lesson, but they do not build upon prior learning.

210. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory where the teachers' good subject knowledge enables pupils to build up a useful body of knowledge. They respond to written questions and complete tasks but do so with limited intellectual effort and depth. Pupils do not generally strive to achieve their best or demonstrate interest or enthusiasm. The achievement of pupils on the GCSE course is unsatisfactory, limited by the short time allocation that results in pressure to complete the syllabus. This leaves insufficient time for exploration of ideas or for the development of a topic. The attitudes of a significant minority towards the subject

further limit the use of discussion and independent research. Where pupils were encouraged to develop their ideas and to debate them as a class, the level of discussion was high and the comments perceptive. The majority of pupils are attentive and concentrate well. In a less where a Year 9 class were considering 'Rite of Passage' boys in particular made good progress as they were actively involved in the discussion. The girls made little contribution and as a result they achieved less. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. They are well supported by the clear structure of the lessons and in some lessons by the level of the oral work. Pupils with higher attainment progress as well as the majority of the group, but where there is insufficient opportunity to develop their ideas further, achievement is limited.

211. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Specialists teach most lessons, and their good subject knowledge enables them to respond to pupils' questions. Lessons are taught in attractive rooms where display is well used to provide opportunities for learning and to celebrate pupils achievements. Lessons are well planned to involve pupils in a range of tasks, particularly in Years 7 to 9, although at times planning is over-ambitious leaving insufficient time to draw the lesson to a thoughtful conclusion. Work sheets are prepared that support pupils' learning and provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. The introduction of the short course GCSE provides a clear program of study and an incentive for pupils to develop their ideas. The very limited time allocation in Years 10 and 11 however, and the under use of homework, reduces opportunities for investigation, as the requirements of the exam syllabus are allowed to dominate. Where pupils are allowed the time to reflect on the issues under investigation, such as the question of suffering, the teacher lifted the level of understanding and pupils were led to a mature consideration of the issues. Teachers use the good practice of linking religious concepts with the experience of the pupils, for example in the investigation of secular signs and symbols before consideration of religious symbols. This supports understanding of abstract concepts. The emphasis upon factual knowledge rather than understanding however, results in insufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their own ideas or to recognise the effects of belief on the believer. The concentration of attention on the syllabus as a result of the limited time available results in a narrow knowledge base and insufficient use of prior learning.

212. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department has a well-developed handbook that reflects a concern to provide high standards. A system of assessment has been established that follows the steps designed to measure progress in the elements of the 'Agreed Syllabus'. The department makes a very good contribution to the moral development of the pupils. They have the opportunity to consider contemporary moral issues such as the question of euthanasia, racism and abortion. When sufficient time is provided, pupils are able to develop their own values and responses to these issues. There is no planned use of ICT, although pupils use it for research and to present their information. The use of artefacts enables pupils to handle concrete examples of religious belief. The lack of a full sized television screen reduces the impact of videos that are so valuable in enabling pupils to visualise ceremonies and events

outside their experience. The selection of library books is poor and does not support research. The majority of books are unsuitable for most pupils and the arrangement of those that would invite interest, low down on the shelves, does not invite pupils to investigate.

213. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The introduction of the short course GCSE has supported the rise in standards in Years 10 and 11, that was a key issue in the last report. This has supported an improvement in attitudes. However, a minority of pupils are still reducing the learning opportunities of their peers by their poor behaviour. Specialists now teach most lessons and the appointment of a second specialist teacher has improved the teaching of religious education. The department is now based in the main school and the two specialist rooms are attractive centres of learning. Students in the sixth forms are still not receiving their entitlement to a religious education.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100	63	0	17	1.0	1.6
Chemistry	5	0	47	0	6	0	0.9
Biology	1	0	53	0	6	0	1.0
Physics	3	0	53	0	8	0	1.1
Computing	2	100	72	50	13	3.0	1.7
ICT	1	100		0		2.0	
Physical Education	5	100		60		3.2	
Religious Studies	1	100		0		2.0	
Sociology	2	50	54	0	12	1.0	1.3
Psychology	4	75	70	0	18	1.5	1.7

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	88	89	38	45	4.8	6.0
Chemistry	8	88	89	50	42	6.0	5.9
Biology	19	100	88	32	34	4.8	5.3
Physics	7	100	88	29	41	6.0	5.7
Geology	2	100	89	0	31	3.0	5.2
Design and technology	2	50	92	0	29	1.0	5.4
Business/Economics	7	71	88	0	36	2.9	5.4
ICT	2	100	85	0	23	6.0	4.6
Physical Education	11	100	91	9	25	4.9	5.0
Sports Studies	1	100	91	0	25	4.0	5.0
Art	9	100	96	50	45	7.3	6.4
Music	1	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.7
Geography	6	67	92	0	37	2.0	5.7
History	19	84	89	37	34	5.1	5.43
Religious Studies	2	100	91	0	35	2.0	5.6
Sociology	11	91	88	0	37	4.2	5.5
Psychology	6	83	88	0	35	4.0	5.3
English Language	17	59	90	12	29	2.7	5.2
English Literature	27	78	96	0	36	3.0	5.9
French	5	80	91	20	39	3.6	5.7
German	5	20	92	0	41	0.8	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics. In 2000 mathematics results were below the national average but showed improvement in

2001. Results for chemistry were close to the national averages in 2000. Results for biology and physics were above the national averages in 2000. Four lessons were observed in mathematics and in half of these the quality of teaching was good. In the three science subjects 13 lessons were observed and nearly half were very good and in all lessons the quality of teaching was at least good.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Teaching and in particular teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Students' attitudes towards learning.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities needed for students to discuss their work.
- Students' grasp of algebra.

214. The inspection covered A level and AS level mathematics in the three areas of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.

215. Examination results are below average although there was some improvement in 2001 when results included one A grade and three B grades. Since the last inspection, results have improved although it was reported that at the time of the last inspection the poor A-level results achieved were not typical. In the last three years, standards have risen steadily. There are no significant variations between the achievements of boys and girls or between different minority ethnic groups.

216. Students enter sixth form lessons from a range of attainment at GCSE, including pupils previously entered for the intermediate and higher GCSE examinations. The standard of work seen in lessons and over time in class matches the national expectation and considering the range of abilities within the groups, represents good progress.

217. The students make good progress overall because the quality of teaching is good. Progress is better in mechanics and pure mathematics than in statistics because students have difficulty in applying the algebra they learn into a statistical context. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. In one pure mathematics lesson the teacher's clear explanation of the topic significantly aided the students' understanding and in a mechanics lesson, students' confidence was high because they knew the teacher could always explain clearly when they were having difficulty. Questioning skills are good, for example, in a statistics lesson the teacher asked probing questions to make the students think more carefully.

218. There are good examples of students working well together, helping and supporting each other when it is appropriate. There are some students who are too dependent on the teacher for guidance and this is linked to the too few opportunities for pupils to improve independent learning skills in Years 7 to 11. Teachers need to consider carefully how long they talk for at the start of lessons. Sometimes it is too long and consequently the higher ability pupils do not make as much progress as they might.

219. Leadership and management of sixth form mathematics are good. There is a clear sense of purpose and teachers are keen for the students to do well. Good use is made of the statistical functions in calculators and this is an efficient use of time. There is some shortage of up to date textbooks but the department is planning to restock shortly.

Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured and the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry enables them to motivate the students well.
- Students enjoy chemistry; they are responsive and participate fully in lessons and have a positive attitude to the subject, which leads to good achievement

Areas for improvement

- The support given to students to help them improve their standards is not sufficiently focused.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the development of independent learning skills and for challenging the higher attaining students to apply their knowledge in new situations.

220. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. These standards are attained because of good teaching. Students' achievements in relation to their prior GCSE performance are good. Students' positive attitudes to work contribute to the good quality of students' learning. Students make good progress in sixth-form chemistry.

221. The GCE A-level examination results have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The performance of both boys and girls has steadily improved. In 2000, the overall pass rate and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, were close to the national averages. In relation to their GCSE results, students did better than expected.

222. The standard of work of current students is average. Students' achievements relative to predictions based on their GCSE results are good. Carefully structured teaching of chemical concepts enables students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the contribution chemistry makes to society. By Year 13, students'

experimental skills are good. They have good manipulative skills and can make accurate detailed observations. Students are able to interpret the information obtained from an experiment and recognise patterns and trends. Planning skills are good for most students although the plans of lower-attaining students lack detail. Evaluation skills are satisfactory but students do not find it easy to assess the reliability of their data or how they can increase their accuracy.

223. In an effective Year 13 lesson students used Le Chatelier's principle to predict the effects of changes in concentration on the position of equilibrium in reactions. They were able to draw pH curves for reactions between acids and alkalis of different strength and work out the suitability of various indicators, before doing related practical work. The lesson was well planned and involved student participation throughout. Students were interested and worked hard, which resulted in good learning. In another lesson, higher-attaining students were confident in calculating the pH of solutions. The lower-attaining students found these calculations difficult. Students have a good grasp of the relevant chemical knowledge but a narrow range of scientific reading limits the development of their intellectual skills.

224. Students in Year 12 are at an early stage of their course. Good teaching supports students, boosting their confidence, which enables them to adjust successfully to the standard of work required. In a Year 12 lesson students were practising working out formulae and balancing equations. The very good relationship between the teacher and students and the encouraging supportive manner of the teacher meant that the students gained confidence in their own ability and experienced success in a carefully structured lesson. Their learning was very good. Year 12 students can describe electron structures of atoms and ions in terms of s, p, and d energy levels. They can recognise the factors involved in the relationship between ionisation energies and atomic number but average and low-attaining students have difficulties in explaining this in their own words in precise enough language. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students due to good support from teachers and support assistants. More enrichment activities involving problem solving and the application of knowledge to new situations would provide more challenge for the higher-attaining students.

225. Teaching is good and this results in good learning. All the lessons seen were at least good. A key strength of the teaching is the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry shown in clear and lively exposition and skilful questioning, building on students' answers so that students have to clarify their thinking. Teachers communicate their own enthusiasm for chemistry, which motivates students to work harder. The very good relationship between teachers and students engenders a positive attitude and interest in chemistry. Teachers are encouraging and supportive, making good use of praise to boost students' confidence. This means that students are responsive and feel comfortable in volunteering answers to teachers' questions, and in asking questions themselves, which enhances their learning. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a purposeful pace with a variety of activities, involving the students in active learning. Students have good listening skills and sustain concentration well. They are co-operative and support each other well in group work.

226. Written work is regularly marked and students are shown how to improve their answers. This support is insufficiently sharply focused on learning targets, which limits its impact. The teaching methods seen during the inspection were often teacher dominated and students have insufficient opportunity to develop independent learning skills. Teachers' expectations are generally appropriately high but in some lessons tasks are the same for students of all attainment levels so that the higher-attaining students are not challenged sufficiently and, in consequence, make less progress.

227. The leadership and management of chemistry are good. Monitoring of teaching and student progress in the subject is effective and the committed teachers work well together, sharing good practice. A sharper focus on developments to raise standards is needed in order to ensure maximum impact on student learning. The improvement since the previous report is good, with a significant improvement in examination results.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is good.

Strengths

- Teaching is good with well planned lessons and an emphasis on practical work which helps students to improve their investigative skills and problem solving.
- The very good accommodation and good resources.

Areas for improvement

- To raise the attainment of boys.
- To develop and improve the use of target setting.

228. The advanced level examination results in 2000 showed a significant improvement from those in 1999 and from those in the previous inspection. In 2000, 95 per cent of the students achieved a pass grade which was well above the national average, while the proportion gaining the highest grades of A and B was just below the national average. Female students did better than male students and this has been the pattern since the previous inspection. The number of students studying Biology has remained steady at about 20 over the last three years and has doubled since the previous inspection making it by far the most popular A-level science. Students who are of average prior attainment do better than their GCSE results might suggest. A small proportion of students did not complete the course, but retention is overall good.

229. The standards of work seen during the inspection is above average. Year 13 students use their knowledge to handle complex numerical data with confidence in behavioural experiments with brine shrimps. Students of average and above average prior attainment have extended their knowledge well beyond GCSE. However, they did not know the taxonomic position of the shrimps. Students do well in lessons and their learning is focused. They can analyse statistical data and

successfully apply the Mann Whitney U test to see if there are any significant differences following random sampling. Students can distinguish between male and female shrimps under low power magnification.

230. Year 12 students are tackling the demanding biochemistry module and after only four weeks show a confidence and expertise in practical work above that seen in GCSE. They identify reducing and non-reducing sugars using specific tests. Prior high attainers are aware of the radical which causes the colour change in the test. Students follow sequential instructions well for doing experiments and there is a substantial amount of learning through practical work. They show good knowledge of protein structure and understand the function of disulphide bonds in the formation of quaternary proteins such as insulin. They can prepare slides of plant animal tissue and compare and contrast the structures. They know the functions of the major organelles found in cells, but a few could not recall the products of photosynthesis when referring to chloroplast function.

231. Students learn well as a result of good teaching. The best features of teaching to promote effective learning are the well structured planning and pace of the lessons. Teachers as a matter of course share the objectives of the lessons with the students. They have good subject knowledge and answer questions with confidence. Their questioning is deep and gives the students opportunity to think more and respond with answers which are more than superficial. The marking of assignments and mini projects is good with the comments informative, showing the students how to improve. However, the marks achieved by students for the evaluation part of course work are low compared to those awarded for planning and implementation. There are few strategies suggested by teachers for improvement in this area. Three of the four teachers are very new to the school and the co-ordinator has rapidly welded together a very good team and supports them well. There is considerable use of ICT in the various units with data logging being predominant.

232. Students show an enthusiasm for science and enjoy investigative work. They have become adept at handling statistics and take responsibility for their experiments. They use their time well in lessons and are relatively expert in effective note taking. They respect one another's opinions and relationships are very good. A particular strength is the way they persevere with tasks, complementing the high expectations of the teacher. They can analyse complex text when the teacher is helping them, but are less confident and accurate when working independently. Students are confident in using text books, but do not always bring them to lessons. The presentation of work is occasionally less than satisfactory with untidy handwriting, but diagrams and graphs are of good quality.

233. The subject co-ordinator provides very good support for the teachers of AS and A-level biology. Standards are improving and the subject is very popular with students. Regular meetings ensure that best practice is shared and the variety of teaching strategies has improved since the previous inspection. Good leadership has led to good learning and there is a target setting based on internal tests, but this needs to be developed more to improve performance.

Physics

Overall, the quality of provision in physics is good.

Strengths

- Very good teaching by a team of experienced and dedicated teachers
- Courses that are well led and keep students well informed of their attainment and progress.
- Excellent staff-student relationships that result in a positive and supportive learning environment.
- Students work well together and share their ideas and resources freely.

Areas for improvement

- The level of specialised equipment needed for the new A/S and A2 courses.

234. In 2000 all students gained A-level passes in the A – E range, two of the seven doing so with grades A/B. 2001 results were not quite as good, four of seven obtaining A – E grades, including one grade A. At AS level, the 2001 results were disappointing for the three candidates, but in 2001 at AS level thirteen of fourteen candidates gained grades A – E, seven of these being grades A or B. Progress since their GCSE examinations the previous year, has therefore been good. Comparisons with national averages are invalid since the group sizes are so small.

235. The standards of work seen have been judged both on the basis of the limited work done since the beginning of this term and the retained work on the AS course of the present Year 13. Written work, past and present, is of a good standard with some excellent diagrams and graphical work, and some very impressive ICT material. Year 12 students have largely successfully made the leap from the GCSE classwork of Year 11 to the independent working required by the AS coursework and assignments. Both they, and Year 13 students appreciate the freedom that this independence gives them to work at their own individual pace and to develop their own enthusiasms and interests. Skills of note taking and of personal research develop steadily through the sixth form years. The use of correct scientific vocabulary in both written work and discussion is well developed in Year 13 while Year 12 students are coming to terms with their teachers' requirements for precise terminology and accurate description. In the laboratories, practical work is of a good standard with students constantly learning new skills as well as re-inforcing those learned in their GCSE courses. The emphasis on independence and the use of initiative gives them additional scope to develop innovative techniques in experimental situations, once the requirements of safety have been met. This, together with the altogether higher level of experimental work, adds additional spice and more challenge to their practical work.

236. The structure of the AS course with its newly developed texts, associated CD-ROM, end-of-unit summaries and questions, and a built-in assessment record is valued by those who have already completed the course. They consider it supportive, and invaluable for work away from school. The present Year 13 students impressively met the demands of the AS course for high-quality data-handling and

graph work without the requirement to be studying A-level mathematics. This has yet to be encountered by Year 12. Similarly, the freedom given to students to design and build some form of electronic device was a challenge that was well met. The assignment that called for each student to research a topic and then to make a presentation to the group produced a wide variety of choices and demonstrated some remarkable application, persistence and initiative. The record of students' presentations is impressive and sets a high standard for Year 12 to match. The AS results of 2001 have given Year 13 students an encouraging start to their A2 course, and they have embarked upon this with enthusiasm. The standard of work at this early stage is encouraging.

237. Teaching is very good, and both teachers can give full rein to their enthusiasm for their own specialism. Their considerable collective experience in A-level teaching and examination preparation are strengths. Students' interest and motivation are raised by staff commitment and ambition for their students. Good planning, a brisk pace, a variety of activities - many of which are new to students - and some unusual approaches all contribute to interesting and absorbing lessons. The staff have known their students for many years, and the high quality of staff-student relationships and the supportive nature of small-class teaching create an encouraging and positive atmosphere in which students can learn well and enjoy their learning. Students have responded well to this, and the maturity of students of both years is impressive. A-level work can be a daunting prospect, especially when the topic is unfamiliar. When these lessons occur after the normal working day has finished, an extra effort is needed to maintain the pace and complete the task. That both staff and students have the energy and commitment to do this says much for their determination and ambition and is most commendable. ICT resources at school and at home are well used, and some very high quality assignments have been produced.

238. Good leadership and management are reflected by the results achieved so far and by the evident enjoyment of students of both years. Both courses are well planned and normal school resources support the practical activities satisfactorily. However the increasingly technological content of the courses shows the need to increase the level of provision of some high-technology equipment, currently met by teachers' personal resources. Examination results are rising, and improvement is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design. Standards achieved by students in the 2000 A-level examinations were well above the national averages. In 2001 all candidates gained the higher grades A or B. Four lessons were observed and the quality of teaching was very good in three-quarters.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The standards achieved are very high.

Areas for improvement

- The opportunities for students to use ICT need to be strengthened so that sufficient good quality equipment and related software is accessible as required.

239. In year 2000 GCE A-level examinations the proportion of students gaining grades A-B was above the national average. Males and females achieved equally well, surpassing their expected grades. In year 2001 GCE A-level examinations all students gained grades A-B. This is a very good improvement on the previous good year.

240. Standards are well above average. In work seen, students in Year 12 continue to build on the good practice established during their GCSE studies and rely heavily on their sketchbook studies to explore and develop ideas and to investigate and make art. They record and examine material about artists' work that informs their own work and they record their reactions and feelings to it. A student has recorded images of Kandinsky paintings in her sketchbook and written about her understanding of them and her response to them. The influence of her studies is clear in the 'hanging' she produced. There are very sound drawing skills from those students who attend life-drawing classes at a local centre. Other students' drawing is good. Painting skills are well developed in all students' work and evident in large acrylic still-life paintings and figures combining paint and other applied materials. Students are inventive and use materials in novel ways. For example, a male student has combined display boxes of sand, gravel, plant material and litter with painting and Ordnance Survey map in an ambitious piece constructed in an old plan chest drawer. It explores the theme of 'Journey' and acknowledges the work of contemporary artists Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long, while being a very personal and creative response. All students make constructions using a wide range of materials. In a project that starts with knotting, twisting and joining, pupils examine the work of contemporary artists, Titus Carmel and Cornelia Parker. They combine many materials in organic, expressive forms in a range of scales up to nine feet tall. Achievement is very good as all students build on the knowledge and skill established at GCSE. They work with increasing independence and a great deal of their work is produced at home without supervision.

241. Students continue to achieve well in Year 13 where standards are well above average. They continue to produce extended studies on broad themes with increasing independence. A unit with portraiture as its focus is typical of the range and quality produced by well-motivated students. There are large quantities of high quality work, comprising much drawing from observation to more analytical studies in a wide range of materials. There is very expressive use of relief printmaking,

using collograph techniques with great sensitivity. Materials are always used in inventive and novel ways. For example, a painting is layered on the pages of a large acetate 'flip-chart' so that as the pages are turned the portrait subject dissolves away to great effect. Opportunities for developing work using ICT are limited due to difficulties in gaining access to sufficient equipment.

242. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge, which, across the department, covers a wide range of specialist art and design activities. This enables students to gain skills and knowledge in areas that match their interests and aptitudes. Teachers have very high expectations of students and they respond well and take increasing responsibility for their learning. Teachers set work of sufficient challenge and teach students a variety of strategies so that they can identify and overcome problems consequently, each student is able to make good progress. They use a variety of teaching styles including whole class teaching and individual discussion and support, so that each pupil makes progress and builds confidence in mastering techniques. Close questioning and discussion encourage students to think carefully about their work, clarifying their intentions. Students are able to describe how they have developed an idea, what they are currently doing and how it will be brought to a conclusion. Their work is personal and relevant to them.

243. Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent. They work with great focus in the classroom and a great deal of their work is produced at home. They express enthusiasm for the subject and the work of the department. Relationships between staff and students are very good. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The arrangements for ongoing assessment are very good and contribute well to students' motivation and the progress that they make. The course is well-planned and builds on what has been achieved in GCSE, as well as challenging students to make greater gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on geography and history. Attainment in geography was below the national average in 2000 but results showed an improvement in 2001. In history results matched the national averages in 2000 and showed a significant improvement in 2001. A total of nine lessons were observed. In history the quality of teaching in all lessons was at least satisfactory, occasionally good and very good. In geography teaching was satisfactory, occasionally good and on one occasion unsatisfactory.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Fieldwork contributes effectively to students' learning.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for more students to play a more active part in lessons.
- The overall quality of students' written work.

244. The subject attracts around twenty students following AS and A-level courses. Attainment in geography is below average. Results in the GCE A-level examination in 2000 were well below the national average, although from a small number of students. Results in 2001 showed an improvement, both in the overall pass rate and in the percentage of students achieving the highest grades, A and B, although they remain below average. In three of the last four years girls' attainment at A-level has been at least average. It is the below average attainment of boys that has depressed results, which are now lower than at the previous inspection. In the AS examination a quarter of students achieved the highest grades and all but one student reached a pass grade. In relation to their GCSE grades students' achievements are satisfactory.

245. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that standards remain somewhat below average. Although students acquire a satisfactory body of knowledge, few write detailed, analytical accounts. Fieldwork contributes effectively to students' understanding of physical and human processes. They acquire information independently from a variety of sources including the Internet. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but most students are adapting to the demands of the work. They apply their map skills and local place knowledge to investigate settlement patterns. Lower attaining students, especially boys, need more help to structure their written work more effectively and to acquire and use technical terms.

246. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, so that explanations are clear. Assessed work provides helpful comments to students about how to improve their work. In a Year 12 lesson students were guided in how to carry out an investigation, using maps of the local area. The activity was well planned to deepen students' understanding of settlement hierarchies, to develop their skills as independent learners and to build on earlier experiences of course work for GCSE. A weakness in the teaching is an overemphasis on the acquisition of information which limits opportunities for students to develop analytical and interpretative skills. In some lessons there is too much emphasis on note taking and students' involvement is limited to brief oral responses to teachers' questions.

247. Students' learning is satisfactory. They are attentive and sustain concentration so that lesson time is generally well used for learning. Some are clearly challenged by individual projects for examination coursework and are able to compare their urban fieldwork with geographical models of urban growth.

248. Development planning has identified some appropriate areas for improvement, but as schemes of work are being up-dated, they would benefit from a clearer identification of how skills are to be incorporated into each module and suggestions about the use of a wider range of teaching and learning styles. Access to textbooks is satisfactory, with books issued for private study. Students express appreciation of their good access to computers with the department's recently acquired ICT facilities.

History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Results at GCSE A-level showed a marked improvement in 2001.
- Students have sound knowledge and understanding, and a grasp of concepts, which they apply well in class work and in answering routine questions.
- Teaching is good with particular strengths in planning and structured support to help students to develop knowledge, understanding and skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students' skills in debating and discussion are not as well developed as in other aspects of their work.
- The allocation of teaching accommodation does not support learning well.
- Aspects of teaching do not provide sufficient challenge to encourage students to work independently.

249. GCE Advanced level examination results, have improved steadily over the last three years with a particularly marked improvement in 2001. In 2000 results matched the national average with students achieving well in comparison with their attainment at GCSE. The 2001 results were significantly higher. All apart from one of the students who took the examination gained a pass grade, with a high proportion gaining the highest grades of A and B. Male and female students did equally well. All students completed the course. In relation to their GCSE results, students did better than expected. Some with modest GCSE results did exceptionally well.

250. Students were entered for the GCE Advanced Supplementary level courses for the first time in 2001. All apart from one student entered, gained a pass grade with one gaining a grade A and six achieving grade C. With the exception of two students, all have continued to study history at GCE Advanced level.

251. Observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students work show that standards of work currently are average. This is lower than the 2001 results but standards reflect the levels of students' prior attainment at GCSE. In both Years 12 and 13 students are achieving well in comparison with these. Year 12 students following the GCE Advanced Supplementary level have made a sound start overall but need to commit themselves more fully to reading and preparation for lessons if they are to succeed.

252. Students' historical knowledge and understanding is sound and used effectively, in responding to the teachers' questioning in lessons and in essay writing. Written work is stronger than oral work. It is detailed and very carefully organised. Notes become concise and clearly focused, and essays and assignments are well structured with sound substantiated conclusions. This was reflected very well for instance, in the assignments on Henry VIII' s break with Rome, which

indicated a good command of the subject matter, effective synthesis and comparison of historical interpretations and coherent conclusions.

253. Students have a good understanding of differences in historical interpretations but tend to lack confidence in discussing their relative reliability and usefulness in convincing argument. In Year 12 especially, students ability to discuss and argue from a well informed base is restricted by a lack of wide reading resulting in an insecure knowledge base. Consequently they have difficulty in identifying closely with the topic being studied. Some of these shortcomings in Year 12 are attributable to the early stage of the course, but even higher attaining students in Year 13, while confident in paired discussion, are less fluent in whole class debate. For example, in a lesson on Henry IV's success in restoring the economic prosperity in France, students discussed issues knowledgeably in pairs, but were rather shy and lacked authority in their presentations to the whole group.

254. Overall however, students achieve well. This is largely because of the very strong guidance provided for their study and development of skills, and also because of the students' very positive attitudes towards the subject and their good response in lessons. Teaching is good. This is evident from the lessons observed during the inspection where all the teaching was least satisfactory, and in two of the five lessons seen at least good. Students' written work also reflects good teaching especially in the impact of well structured guidance for note-taking and essay writing. The impact of this guidance, and of thorough and detailed marking, is clearly reflected in the improvement in the standards of students' written work as they progress through Years 12 and 13.

255. The strongest teaching includes particularly good challenge to the students to work accurately as historians in the development of investigative skills. A good example of this was a Year 13 lesson where students, in preparation for the writing of a course assignment, were required to analyse and evaluate the work of a historian from the point of view of its clarity of focus, use of evidence and soundness of conclusion. The students progressed well in this task because of the excellent practical guidance for the development of study skills, and the teacher's unrelentless challenge that they should be rigorous in their analysis. Students' skills were further enhanced by the use of ICT.

256. Rapport in lessons is very good and encourages students, especially those who start from modest prior achievement, to do well. The well planned and clearly focused lessons enable students to learn through a range of well-structured tasks. But there is a tendency in some lessons for learning to be too dependent on the teacher with too little demand made on students in taking a lead in their learning. There are times also when students are not sufficiently challenged to extend and deepen their thinking through for example, probing and searching questioning. There is a tendency for questioning to be used to check knowledge and understanding, rather than to develop it. Sometimes opportunities are also missed for students to challenge each other. For instance, in the Year 13 lesson on Henry IV's economic strategies in France, students' presentations on the topic were politely accepted by their peers rather than being challenged and discussed.

257. Students know how well they are doing and are helped to improve their standards through constructive guidance, and encouragement to evaluate and plan their own work. Their progress is closely monitored by routine marking and regular assessment linked to course requirements which leads to formal feedback and target setting.

258. Students' good achievement and the good quality of the teaching and provision can be attributed to the good leadership and management of the subject by an experienced head of department. Her enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject is shared by both teachers and students. She has ensured that the curriculum provides students with opportunities to widen their historical knowledge through studying a period not studied in depth previously, and which provides very good support for their development as historians. Work is well supported and directed. Schemes of work have been revised to meet the new syllabus requirements and work in the department is monitored in conjunction with Performance Management procedures. Many of the processes used within the department however are informal and need to be more rigorous to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching especially.

259. The use and availability of resources is another area for improvement. While the use of ICT is being developed well and students are encouraged to read widely, the books available are limited in range resulting in an over reliance on reproduced extracts, and a restriction on students' wider reading and historical enquiry. Furthermore, the quality of students' learning is adversely affected by the allocation of different rooms in different parts of the school. In some instances this results in learning being disrupted by the need to change rooms half way through a double lesson.

260. Good improvement has occurred since the last inspection. Standards have improved and good standards of teaching and management have been maintained. The uptake for the subject has continued to rise.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English. Students' attainments in 2000 were below the national averages but showed significant improvement in 2001. Four lessons were observed and the quality of teaching was at least good and on one occasion excellent.

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- Standards achieved by students.
- Quality of teaching in the sixth form.

Areas for improvement

- More variety in teaching and learning activities.

261. In 2000 GCE A-level results were below national averages. Three quarters of candidates in English Literature passed, but none achieved the highest grades A or B. In English Language 61 per cent of students passed and 12 per cent achieved grades A or B. 2001 saw a significant improvement. All students taking English Literature or English Language and Literature passed and nearly three quarters of all students gained the highest grades A or B. AS Level results were good in 2001. All candidates passed and approximately one in five achieved the grades A or B. Students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and the staying on rate from AS to A2 (the full A level) is high.

262. Observation of lessons and analysis of samples of work confirm that standards achieved in the sixth form are good. In discussion students showed a good knowledge of the aspect of language being studied, including some perceptive analysis of styles used in literature written for small children. The discussion of language use was of a high standard and well above that required at GCSE. Students' work in English literature indicates a sound understanding of the writer's intentions, critical values, genre and period. One group was investigating some of the conventions of Restoration comedy but could also build upon earlier knowledge to make useful comparison between Congreve's characters and those in 'Much Ado About Nothing' who also disguise their affections by railing about the opposite sex. Written work is of a good standard. Students write with accuracy. All use technical terms well and the most able show discrimination in their use of critics and references. Student use the Internet for research purposes and are able to question the accuracy and usefulness of what they download.

263. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the sixth form. All of the teaching in the sixth form was at least good and in one quarter of lessons the teaching was excellent, promoting the highest standards of learning. Teachers work well together and develop detailed knowledge of the part of the syllabus for which they are responsible. The amount of linguistic research being done by those teaching the A-level English Language modules is impressive and their enthusiastic response to the challenge communicates itself to the students. Some lessons include a variety of activities but the majority are organised as teacher-led seminars. Students respond well to questions; teachers offer prompt and constructive responses to students' answers and progress are being made at an appropriate rate. However, a variety of activities should be developed including more, which demand more active and investigative participation, by students in their own learning. Students receive very good advice on how to approach a text and how to plan their work. Written work is marked conscientiously and accurately so students benefit from accurate judgements on the quality of their work and how it might be improved.

264. Students learn well. Girls outnumber boys and achieve better. In discussion they are positive about their teaching and about their personal progress. They are able to discuss their work with confidence and use references to support their judgements. The part of the course involving a comparative study of two or more

texts gives them some opportunity to pursue their own interests. There is evident growth in maturity and ability between the first and second years of the course as students respond to the challenge of the teaching and the material.

265. The leadership and management of the subject at this level are good. Students are happy to have three teachers, associating each one with a text or specialism. Collaboration between teachers is good and the academic leadership of the subject is very good, promoting high standards and quality. Teachers provide a valuable range of additional reference materials. Assessment of students' progress is accurate and they are advised about their personal targets.