

INSPECTION REPORT

RUSHCLIFFE SCHOOL

West Bridgford

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122860

Headteacher: Mr R Gullis

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett
17331

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th March 2002

Inspection number: 189709

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Graham Marson
Date of previous inspection:	14 th October 1996

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31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
2396	M Davison	Team inspector	Science	
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7084	D Beaumont	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are learning opportunities?
18261	A Hill	Team inspector	Art	
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15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business education	
27082	G Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Post 16 French	
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18755	R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
1523	T James	Team inspector	Religious education	
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equality of opportunity	
17478	H Betterton	Team inspector	Post-16 Media Studies	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school is located in West Bridgford, on a large open site with a leisure centre, which houses part of the teaching accommodation. The main teaching blocks were constructed about 40 years ago. There are 1202 boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 and 171 students in the sixth form, giving an overall total of 1373 on roll. The school is bigger than the average secondary school nationally. Pupils and students are drawn from the districts and villages on the south side of Nottingham, including parts of the city, with many pupils and students being transported by buses. They come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds, with a balance between those who experience social and financial advantages and disadvantages. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. About 10 per cent of the pupils and students come from ethnic minority heritage, although the percentage of pupils not having English as their first language is above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and holding statements to address their specific need, is below the national average. On entry there is a fully comprehensive profile, with similar proportions of pupils with above and below average standards for their age. The school's aims seek to provide for the needs of all of its pupils and students and to develop their personal skills, confidence and academic potential.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school. Standards in National Curriculum tests and public examinations at GCSE and GCE A level are well above average. Teaching is overall of a good standard. The headteacher gives strong leadership. Since the last inspection he has initiated good improvements which have addressed the shortcomings in management, although there are issues which still need to be resolved. Pupils and students have positive attitudes and achieve well but a minority of pupils undermine the standards and ethos of the school. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Achieves good success in examinations for the majority of its pupils.
- Teaches well in the large majority of lessons to promote good achievement.
- Achieves good standards and attitudes for the majority of pupils.
- Knows its pupils and students well and provides sound care for their development.
- Provides good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Evaluates and prioritises effectively for improvement.

What could be improved

- Elements of leadership and management.
- The provision for pupils' personal development to address the behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils.
- The range of extra-curricular activities.
- The quality of the environment, including some health and safety issues.
- Statutory requirements for Year 11 reports and a daily act of collective worship.

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

The strengths of the school clearly outweigh the areas for improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996 and the overall improvement since then has been good. Examination results have risen and there is a better level of challenge for higher attainers. The quality of teaching has been improved and whilst there is now more good teaching, there are still some shortcomings. Good procedures for assessment have been introduced but they are not yet consistently used. Sound progress has been made in improving the accommodation through the learning resources centre and refurbishment of science laboratories. The finances are now well structured with clear systems for monitoring cost effectiveness. Computer resources have been well developed and there is satisfactory application of knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Where progress has been unsatisfactory is in meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious

education in the sixth form. Most significantly the changes brought about by the leadership and management of the headteacher have been good although there are still some weaknesses in the practice of senior and middle managers. The school recognises that it has the potential for even further improvement, a view that is endorsed by inspection evidence, but which is being restricted by shortcomings in management.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

Key

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

At the age of 14, the pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 were above average. Results were well above average in science, above average in mathematics and average in English, as they have been in two of the last three years. When pupils' attainment on entry is taken into account, overall results are good with the majority of pupils achieving well. The improvement in results has been better than the improvement nationally. Inspection evidence confirms standards in the core subjects are above average. Standards by Year 9 are well above average in science and above average in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, design and technology, geography and religious education. They are average in other subjects except for music, where they are below average. In 2001, GCSE results were well above average. Overall, the results represent good achievement on the part of the majority of pupils. Results in separate subjects generally compare very well with national averages, except in business studies and information and communication technology where they are average. Overall, improvement has been at the same pace as that seen nationally. Although both boys and girls achieved well above national averages, boys performed better with the gap similar to that during recent years. GCSE results in 2001 were very close to the school's targets. Overall, A-level results in 2001 were above average, as has been the case in recent years. In art and design, mathematics and biology, results were well above average. They were above average in geography, media studies and physical education. Considering students' performance at GCSE, the majority of students achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils have good attitudes towards their work and teachers. They are proud of their school. Unsatisfactory attitudes are displayed by a minority of mainly older pupils in Years 10 and 11.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. Some older pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not always behave sensibly.
Personal development and relationships	The majority of pupils enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other, although a minority of pupils have difficulty in sustaining relationships because of their immature attitudes and anti-social behaviour.
Attendance	The overall attendance figures are good. Both authorised and unauthorised absences for the last year were better than the average for secondary schools nationally.

The overall positive attitudes, good behaviour, good attendance and strength of relationships contribute extensively to the academic standards of the majority of pupils. They respond well to the high expectations made of them and appreciate the opportunities that they experience, taking good advantage of them as well as contributing well to the overall life of the school. The minority of pupils, whose attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, interfere with their own learning and that of other pupils, and they underachieve because of their approach. These pupils undermine the generally good standards of behaviour around the school, as their boisterousness can intimidate younger pupils, and they do not care for their environment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. In about a third of lessons, teaching is very good or better and in nearly three quarters, it is good or better. It is unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the sixth form is very good overall. The teaching of English is satisfactory and in mathematics and science is good overall. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound and is often supported through other subjects. The teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory because, in a minority of lessons, there are shortcomings and the application across subjects is not effectively developed. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and leads to their good progress and subsequent standards. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, providing a stimulating challenge to their pupils, to which they willingly respond. Teachers enthuse their pupils and work set meets their differing needs. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support, as are the minority of pupils with English as an additional language. In most subjects gifted and talented pupils are effectively challenged. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is good teaching over time, but that there are some shortcomings. These occur when expectations and challenge do not sufficiently enable pupils to be involved in their own learning. It is also apparent in the personal and social education courses where it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is satisfactory breadth and balance for Years 7-11 and in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The overall provision is good. Statutory requirements are well met and the use of individual behaviour and education plans is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Strategies support this minority of pupils well and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The personal and social education programme for Years 7-11 and general studies in the sixth form are good. Teaching of the programme is inconsistent. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The overall care is good and assessment procedures are supporting target setting and standards of achievement.

National Curriculum statutory requirements are met in Years 7-11. The curriculum provides effectively for the needs of a minority of pupils with opportunities for an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The school recognises that this latter aspect requires development and there are planned initiatives for a consortium with other providers in the area. The application of information and communication technology skills is satisfactory overall but some subjects do not plan sufficiently well for their use. There is satisfactory provision for moral and social development, but opportunities are missed across the curriculum for spiritual and cultural development, although there is a planned initiative to develop this work through a citizenship programme. The good procedures for assessment, which have been well developed, are benefiting pupils' awareness, but the use of the procedures is only satisfactory, reflecting the fact that not all departments are using them to their full potential.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides clear direction. There are inconsistencies whereby some senior and middle managers do not provide sufficient support and this impedes the pace of change.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The work of the governors is effective and they generally fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Analysis of tests results is carried out and used for whole school and for individual pupil target setting and is increasingly used within the performance management targets for departments.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of financial and human resources through an effective strategic development plan. The school is giving good value for money.

The overall vision for improvement and high expectations has initiated positive changes in standards and management. Whilst the overall academic standards being achieved by pupils and students are good this masks the fact that, because of the limitations in management, the teaching and learning opportunities for all pupils are not being rigorously monitored and evaluated. The school recognises these shortcomings and governors have a good strategic performance plan which has the potential to initiate further school improvement. Nevertheless they need to address the shortcomings urgently to bring about changes which ensure that all managers provide consistent practice in implementing

procedures. The governors do not fulfil their responsibilities with regard to a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form.

There is sufficient experience amongst the teaching and support staff to generally meet the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation is broadly satisfactory with some good points, such as the leisure centre facilities, the learning resource centre and computer suites, and in the grouping of rooms for subjects. There are significant problems with the overall fabric and some roofs and many footpaths are dangerous. This represents some health and safety issues. Following damage to the buildings, the art department is housed in temporary accommodation. Dining and social facilities for pupils and students are poor. Resources are satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards and progress being achieved by their children. • How well the school generally cares for its pupils. • The generally good attitudes being promoted and achieved by the school. • The good quality of teaching. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards of behaviour. • Information about the school and the progress their children are making. • The amount of homework set. • Extra-curricular activities. • How well the school works with them.

There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors agree with parents and carers that standards and teaching are good and that the majority of pupils do have good attitudes. They also consider that there is effective leadership and management but inspection evidence shows that there are shortcomings. Insufficient evidence was available to substantiate the fact that parents feel the school does not work with them. Although there are some differences in approach from teachers and heads of year, they are generally readily available to speak with parents, many of whom make regular contact to discuss progress and issues of concern. The presentation of one annual report meets requirements, although they do not contain a report for physical education in Year 11. Inspectors support the views that there is a need to improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils and the procedures for homework. Whilst there is a good contribution of sporting activities, the range of extra-curricular activities requires review.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is part of a large comprehensive school located in West Bridgford, on the south side of Nottingham. There are 171 students on roll and this makes it a larger sixth form than the national average. Students are drawn from a large area surrounding the school and they come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds. There is an open entry policy and thus attainment on entry covers the full range of achievement at GCSE. There are many other providers of post-16 education in the area and a significant number of pupils leave the school at age 16, although a minority of students join from other schools. This reflects the fact that the sixth form subject choices are mainly in traditional 'academic subjects' and there are limited options for vocational courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The effective provision for an academic curriculum meets the needs of the students and they achieve well. Teaching is very good overall. Leadership and management is good. In relation to the quality of teaching, courses offered and the progress and standards achieved, the provision is cost-effective.

Strengths

- Many students achieve well.
- There is good provision for many subjects.
- The large majority of students display good attitudes, relationships and behaviour.

What could be improved

- The overall quality of leadership and management.
- Arrangements for personal development and registration.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Meeting the statutory requirements for religious education.
- Enrichment programmes for leisure and recreation.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are well above average and students have well developed individual study skills and work hard. Teaching is satisfactory.
Biology	Very good. Standards are well above the national average and improving. The quality of teaching is very good.
Geography	Very good. Examination results are above average and represent good achievement. Students are well motivated and respond well to the very good teaching.
Information and communication technology	Good. Attainment at A level is at least in line the national average. The quality of teaching is good and promotes a good quality of learning. ICT resources for teaching and learning are good.
Art	Very good. Standards are very good and well above average in recent public examinations. Teaching is very good and some is of an exceptional standard.
Media Studies	Good. Students make good progress and achieve well and results are above average. Teaching is good.
Physical Education	Good. Teaching is very good, as are the attitudes and commitment of the students. Standards are above average.
English	Satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and standards are average for the course. Relationships between staff and students are positive.
French	Good. Standards at A level are average over recent years and in 2001, AS results were below average. Achievement in Year 13 is in line with expectations for the course. Teaching is consistently good.

Improvements are required in the management of the subject timetable and for an enrichment programme of leisure and recreational activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There is good personal guidance for students as they consider their post-18 choices but the open access for them to prospectuses is limited. Students are well known on a personal level and feel that they can approach staff for support. The tutorial programme has some significant shortcomings. Assessment procedures are sound and the majority of students have a reasonable understanding of how well they are doing. The overall provision for guidance and support is satisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Overall it is satisfactory. Whilst there is adequate management to ensure that most aspects of care and teaching are maintained there is insufficient direction being given to ensure that issues are reviewed and resolved. For example, the quality of accommodation, consistent monitoring of teaching and learning and opportunities for students' personal development.

Many aspects of the management of sixth form courses lie with subject leaders with responsibility across the full 11-18 age range. Aspects which relate solely to sixth form development are

inconsistently dealt with. Inspection evidence raises concerns that the arrangements for registration are inadequate. Attendance at tutorial sessions is also inconsistent and the statutory requirements for religious education are not met. This key issue from the previous report has not been addressed. The school recognises that there are limitations in the range of courses offered but there are discussions at a local level between post-16 providers to establish a consortium to widen opportunities.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Only a minority of students responded to the questionnaire. In many discussions with students during the inspection, evidence shows that there is a very positive commitment to their work and that they enjoy sixth form life. Inspectors agree with their opinions about the positive aspects and also with areas that could be improved.

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most enjoy their sixth form experiences and opportunities. • They feel that they are well taught. • Students feel that they are well supported in their applications for higher education and other avenues. • Most know how well they are doing in their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of general accommodation. • Access to computers and a work centre. • Open access to literature which refers to their future options.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is broadly average. Their results in National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven over the last few years have been average in English and mathematics; above average in science. Results of cognitive ability tests taken by pupils in Year 7, which aim to measure potential, show a similar picture.
2. By the end of Year 9, pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests has been above average in recent years, having risen steadily since the time of the last inspection when it was below average. The improvement has been better than that found nationally. In three of the last four years, attainment in science has been well above average, in mathematics above average and in English in line with the average. At the higher levels, pupils achieved average results in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. There is no significant difference in the overall attainment or achievement of boys and girls. These results represent good achievement in science and mathematics. In these subjects, good teaching and management are the significant factors responsible for the good results. In English, where teaching is satisfactory and management has not given such a high priority to improving performance, pupils make satisfactory progress. In 2000, due to the unusually high attainment of those pupils when they entered the school, results in English, mathematics and science were well above average. In comparison with schools in similar contexts, results at the expected level were below average in English and mathematics and average in science. At the higher levels, results were again below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science.
3. In GCSE examinations in 2001, the school's results as measured by pupils' average points score were well above average. This was also the case in respect of the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more higher grades at A*-C. The proportion achieving 5 or more grades of A*-G was above average but as a number of the lowest attaining pupils follow non-GCSE courses at the local college, the proportion attaining at least one grade A*-G was in line with the national average. Overall, results represent good achievement for most pupils and are due to good teaching, pupils' diligence and efficient preparation for the examinations. Since the time of the last inspection, results have risen in line with the national trend. In the last 3 years, boys' results have been consistently higher than girls' with boys' results being well above average; that of girls, above average. In 2001, these differences arose due to the much higher attainment of boys in art, French and religious education. In 2000, the school's results were close to their challenging yet realistic targets. In 2001, the target set for the average point score per pupil was met. Good results in the A*-C grades were achieved in art, science, design and technology, English literature, French, geography, history and religious education. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average at 5 A*-C and average at 5 A*-G but well below for 1A*-G, reflecting the fact that some pupils take non-GCSE courses with alternative accreditation. The overall points score per pupil was above average.
4. By the age of 14, the large majority of pupils achieve well. This is most evident in science, where standards are well above average and in mathematics, modern foreign languages, art, design and technology, geography and religious education, where standards are above average. Good teaching and positive attitudes of the majority of pupils lead to these good achievements. Standards in music are below average by the end of Year 9 and reflect the teaching and provision. By the age of 16, pupils continue to achieve well. Standards are well above average in science, art and religious education. In most other subjects standards are above average, except in German, business studies, information and communication technology and core physical education, where they are average.
5. Throughout the school, standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, although not all subjects consistently ensure that they concentrate planning to make the best use of opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills. In all subjects, pupils' skills in reading and writing by the age of 14 are above those that one would expect to find nationally. Higher

attaining pupils can read a variety of different kinds of text for different purposes and extract and synthesise information from what they read. Lower attaining pupils read with less assurance and can interpret what they read in a straightforward way. Pupils speak quite confidently in both formal and informal situations. They usually join in discussions enthusiastically and put forward their points of view effectively. Some subjects actively promote different writing skills, such as the art department which places strong emphasis on good quality writing and research skills, and modern foreign languages which reinforces spelling and grammar. In religious education pupils write in different styles for a variety of purposes and teachers stress correct terminology. In numeracy, Most pupils can meet the demands made of them for the use of numeracy in other subjects. For example, in science, design and technology, geography and physical education. Standards in information and communication technology are average in pupils' knowledge and skill but below average in the application of these skills through their use in subjects across the curriculum.

6. Many pupils with special educational needs gain at least one GCSE grade and achieve well. They are also successful in gaining Entry Level Certificates in history and geography and the short GCSE course in RE giving pupils the opportunity to succeed, all of which reflect the good teaching and support that these pupils receive. There is challenging work for gifted and talented pupils taking place in some departments and the school has recently analysed data showing pupils' attainment, particularly in the core subjects. Those pupils that the school identifies as gifted and talented make good progress and achieve well, as do other pupils who have high prior attainment. The school has a very small number of pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. They are supported well, make quick progress and consequently achieve well.

Sixth form

7. In recent years, including 2001, the average points score at A-level has been well above average with students making good progress from GCSE and achieving well. In 2001, results in art and design, biology, geography, media studies, general studies and economics were well above average. English Literature, mathematics and French were above average, with most other subjects achieving average results, although in design and technology, sociology and history, results were below average.
8. Students' diligent attitudes to learning, good independent study, good teaching and teachers' increasing familiarity with the recent changes to courses underpin the good standards, both in results and in students' current work. Overall, students attain and achieve well in their courses.
9. In the first examinations at advanced supplementary (A/S) level in 2001, results show achievement to be satisfactory. In art, mathematics and physical education, achievement was good. In business studies, French and German it was unsatisfactory. This underachievement in languages arose from the oral components of the examinations whilst that in business studies was due to serious disruption to continuity of teaching that was beyond the school's control.
10. Key skills have only recently been assessed and at the time of the inspection, the first results had not been published. However, students are sufficiently competent in communication, application of number and information and communication technology, to be able to meet the demands of their courses and to support their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Overall, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development make a positive contribution to their attainment and progress. The majority of pupils have a good attitude towards their studies and enjoy the learning activity during lessons. They work hard and are enthusiastic and interested. The good behaviour and attitudes of most pupils which was reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained as a strength of the school. For example, in a Year 11 GCSE drama lesson pupils showed firm commitment and sensitivity when creating short drama scenes and evaluating and analysing their work. A Year 10 GCSE English group concentrated very well and worked hard on a revision exercise. In art, geography, biology and religious education, pupils display very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning. During music lessons pupils in

all year groups who receive instrumental tuition are highly motivated and enjoy the experience. When pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from lessons to work in small groups they are interested and keen to do well. Since the time of the last inspection the school now has a minority of pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 whose immature and uncooperative attitude can disrupt lessons, which has a negative effect on their progress and on the progress of other pupils in the class.

12. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good and often very good during lessons and whilst moving around the school. While some parents consider that the standard of behaviour is good, there are others who have serious concerns about unsatisfactory behaviour during lessons, around the site and on the school buses. The inspection confirms that there are a number of boys and some girls whose behaviour gives cause for concern. This group of pupils shows a disregard for the code of conduct and their anti-social behaviour affects the school's reputation. Younger pupils sometimes feel intimidated by the behaviour of some older pupils in corridors, in toilets, at lunchtime and while travelling on school buses. Although there are no apparent instances of repeated systematic bullying or racism, there is a strong culture of antagonism by a minority of older pupils. Inconsistencies in the implementation of the behaviour policy by some staff results in anti-social behaviour around the school and outside areas going unchecked. During the last academic year 63 pupils have been involved in 101 fixed term exclusions and two permanent exclusions all related to serious anti-social behaviour. The proportion of pupils excluded mirrors the ethnic heritage of the pupils.
13. Relationships throughout the school are generally good. The majority of pupils relate well to their teachers and work well in groups sharing resources amicably. The good provision for personal, social and health education helps majority pupils to develop good relationships and most are concerned and supportive of each other. Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and to take responsibility are satisfactory. Most pupils are confident to plan and organise their work, maintain concentration well during lessons and study without constant support. All pupils are responsible for completing a personal organiser which they use well to record timetables, homework and special assignments. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are represented on a School Council, but they are often uncertain about the action taken following discussions and the outcome of their suggestions. Good opportunities for pupils' personal development are provided through their involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Year 7 School Camp. Opportunities for all pupils to be actively involved in decision-making and practical assignments for the school as a community are limited.
14. Attendance is good and above the national average. This has improved since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence at 0.1 per cent is below the national average. A significant number of pupils take holidays during term time. The majority of pupils are punctual although a small number are regular latecomers. Registration and lessons start on time and there is an efficient and orderly start to the day. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards school and on their personal and academic progress.

Sixth form

15. The large majority of sixth formers act as sensible young people. They are positive about their work and their behaviour is good. Their mature attitudes are reflected in their involvement in service to their school. Some are occasionally involved in paired reading and classroom support, and as members of the TALK School Counselling Service, to support pupils in Years 7 and 8. Although the use of the service is limited, pupils in Year 7 speak positively about the opportunity to share their concerns with these older students. These activities add to the overall positive opportunities for the personal development of the students. Attendance is satisfactory and students have the opportunity to manage their private study time, many of whom do so well.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection and over time is good. It provides well for the differing needs of pupils and the provision in many subjects leads to good standards of attainment and achievement. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. In Years 7-11, in the large majority of lessons inspected, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or

better and in over two thirds of lessons it was good or better. In just over a quarter of lessons seen, teaching was very good and on occasions, outstanding. In a minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory and very occasionally poor or very poor. Teaching is marginally better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11 overall, although in the latter two years there was more very good teaching. From the sample of teaching inspected, the best teaching occurs in Years 9 and 11. The quality is weakest in Years 10 and 8, although in both year groups there is a significant amount of good teaching as well as examples of lessons in which improvement is required because of shortcomings which make the teaching and learning unsatisfactory. A significant majority of very good teaching occurs in English, art, design and technology and geography. In mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and religious education there are examples of very good teaching. The examples of excellent teaching do not dominate any one subject but are to be found in several subjects with individual teachers displaying these outstanding skills. The minority of lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory, or worse, occur mainly in science, information and communication technology, music and in the personal and social education course, with very occasional instances in English and mathematics.

17. The very best lessons are ones in which teachers enthuse their pupils and have a rapport which engenders very good levels of learning. In the good and very good teaching, teachers have high expectations to which pupils willingly respond. In these lessons, which are well planned, the learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the outset. Throughout the lesson the objectives frame activity and at the end the teacher returns and through effective questioning checks the quality of understanding and learning. This then supports the development of work for the next lesson. Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge, especially in the way that they have the confidence to develop pupils' ideas and to question them, thus extending knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher revised earlier work spanning a wide range of topics. When the focus was a technique that some pupils had mastered, the teacher required these pupils to provide carefully reasoned explanations. This not only deepened their understanding and provided a good model for others but ensured the full participation of all pupils.
18. In the best lessons, there is effective development of key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The support for the minority of pupils with English as an additional language is good and where they are taught teachers generally support the development of their vocabulary well. Not all subjects plan effectively and consistently to ensure that they support the development of these key skills and opportunities are missed. For example, in religious education, design and technology, geography and science there are good developments and support for computer skills, but the school recognises that there is a significant need to improve the application of skills across the curriculum. The good improvement in investigations in science teaching, research in art and religious education and problem solving exercises in other subjects, such as geography, are very powerful strategies in enhancing pupils' interest and learning.
19. Where teaching is good or better, the quality of classroom management ensures that there are good relationships between teachers and pupils. This is shown as pupils respect their teachers and willingly respond to the work. Pupils enjoy these lessons and they learn well. They respond to the expectations by completing their work. In these lessons there is a good match of the work to meet the differing needs of the pupils so that gifted and talented pupils on the one hand and those with learning difficulties are fully included. There is good teaching of pupils with special educational needs. They learn well and make good progress over time. This was seen in a food technology lesson in Year 7 where pupils quickly grasped the basic elements of how to make flapjacks because of the teacher's careful planning and clear step-by-step explanations. In art pupils achieved well in designing a collage because the work was adapted to their needs. Individual education plans, which are personal to the pupils concerned, give teachers a workable profile to use when planning lessons and effective strategies are used to help pupils achieve success. Learning support teachers and assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of pupils including those pupils with medical or specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They have a good input into the classroom, are involved in the planning and teaching of the lesson and provide clear yet caring attention as and when needed. This good support was seen in a French lesson when Year 9 pupils had to work out how they would book accommodation in France. Here the teaching assistant worked closely with the teacher

and was able to circulate around the room offering help and guidance with certain aspects of the work. Pupils with special educational needs relate well to their teachers and support staff and feel comfortable in the school. This contributes significantly to the positive attitudes they display.

20. The use of homework varies from that which is regularly set and extends pupils' learning to occasions when no work is set. There are examples of exemplary marking and in some books, marking is cursory. The good procedures for assessment vary in their use. Where there is good practice, as in art and science, the information is very well used in planning. It is also used effectively to set pupils targets which support their learning and lead to the good performance of many pupils. This is not always the case and where there is unsatisfactory practice it reflects the lack of rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders and senior staff.
21. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not plan effectively. The work set does not meet the needs of the pupils and class management becomes difficult as pupils lose interest. Occasionally the attitudes and behaviour of pupils makes this task very difficult. In the personal and social education lessons, the majority of tutors use the materials well and teaching and learning is good, but where lessons are unsatisfactory teachers do not have the commitment to deliver the work effectively and pupils become disinterested.

Sixth form

22. Teaching is very good overall, has improved since the last inspection and is contributing greatly to the quality of learning and to improving standards. In four out of every five lessons inspected the teaching is good or better and in nearly a half it is very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Very good teaching was a hallmark in science, art, geography and physical education (examination course) during the inspection. The characteristics listed for Years 7-11 of good teaching are very apparent in Years 12 and 13. Many teachers treat the students as young adults and this encourages a quality partnership in learning. In the best lessons, there is an effective balance between instruction and teaching of knowledge and then good activities which involve the students. There are examples of good question and debating sessions when teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to stretch students' understanding. This occurred in a Year 12 computing lesson when skilful interventions developed good knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of a range of resources and students are encouraged to develop their independent learning techniques through the effective use of homework. This is achieved although facilities outside of lessons are limited. In an excellent biology lesson in Year 12 students presented their research findings on tuberculosis to other members of the group. This they did with confidence, their independent learning having been well structured by the teacher. In art, students show great confidence as they tackle a range of demanding work as their teachers continually challenge their thinking and skills. The use of assessment and marking is good. Through the procedures most students are kept well informed of their progress as, for example, in a Year 13 French lesson where the teacher returned some written homework, stressing the importance of writing corrections and learning from mistakes.

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

23. Overall, curricular provision is satisfactory, as has been the improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum has breadth, balance and relevance and reflects the good equal opportunities policy. The weakness in provision in religious education and modern foreign languages has been resolved. A wide range of opportunities is provided that meets the needs of all pupils and fulfils statutory requirements throughout Years 7 to 11. In addition to a good range of GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11, a small number of students are entered for a Certificate of Achievement course. Good opportunity is provided for the minority of disaffected pupils and those with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 to attend vocational courses as an alternative work-related programme on a part-time basis at South Nottinghamshire College. The minority of pupils with English as an additional language receive sound support which allows them to access the curriculum and learning opportunities. The school provides the opportunity for pupils to study two foreign languages, although it recognises and is reviewing this provision to ensure that neither the pupils nor other subjects are disadvantaged in any way. Music is taught in Years 7-9 and is offered as an optional choice in Years 10 and 11 but it is not

running at present because of the low level of pupil interest. In religious education in Years 10 and 11, all pupils take a half course GCSE, but provision for a full course has to be made outside the normal timetabled day. There is no provision for an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 beyond that for a small number of pupils with special educational needs. Developments are being discussed with other providers within a consortium of schools.

24. The two-week timetable works well on the whole, although some arrangements lead to weaknesses in pupils' continuity and progression. In mathematics, some groups of pupils can have four periods of mathematics in one week and only one during the second week. In music there is insufficient time in Years 7 to 9 to cover all of the programmes of study in sufficient depth, although National Curriculum requirements are met. There are effective setting and other grouping arrangements throughout the school so that in all subjects there is provision for work to be targeted at the most suitable levels. Inspection evidence indicates that thorough planning to extend the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory but that opportunities are missed to challenge such pupils consistently. In some subjects such as science, work is designed to stretch the highest attainers in Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11, and in art practising artists working as teachers bring out talent in pupils and students through their experience and technical expertise. Good learning opportunities occur through the use of the local area in history but in geography, although some fieldwork is undertaken, this is not done consistently across all year groups.
25. The great majority of pupils with special educational needs follow the full school timetable and are taught in mainstream classes. However, a small number of vulnerable pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from being in small learning groups. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils receive curriculum support in place of one option and are able to improve learning skills and give extra time to preparing coursework in a number of other subjects. A whole school approach has been developed which meets the needs of pupils experiencing difficulties and staff are becoming more aware of the learning support systems that are in place. Departmental representatives are used to raise awareness of issues and there is good in-class support from a team of teaching assistants.
26. Overall, provision for literacy is satisfactory. The English department is adopting the Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) literacy strategy and practice is spreading across the school. Each faculty has been required to identify ways in which teachers can contribute to the teaching of literacy and all staff have had training. A target group of Year 7 pupils attends literacy Progress Units to improve their skills. These are taken by teachers and classroom assistants and well co-ordinated by the special educational needs organiser. Monitoring and evaluation of practice, to gauge the impact on pupils' skills levels, is still to be undertaken. Inspection evidence recognises that some subjects are making good progress in this work to achieve a satisfactory judgement overall. The planning for numeracy is satisfactory. Information and communication technology is taught as a discrete subject throughout the school. In addition, subjects across the curriculum carry a responsibility to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. In this respect the provision is satisfactory as there are elements of good practice, but in some subjects planning is insufficiently advanced. This was an issue at the last inspection and improvement has been satisfactory. Pupils make good use of the new facilities in the Learning Resources Centre both as part of the timetable and after school, for homework and research for project work.
27. The well-organised personal, social and health education programme includes sex education, and alcohol and drugs awareness. It includes cross-curricular themes such as environmental education, economic and industrial understanding and aspects of citizenship. The drugs awareness element is well reinforced by input from the police. Because of variations in the quality of tutorial provision, this programme is under review and future monitoring and evaluation procedures need to be considered as part of that process.
28. Careers education in Years 9-11 is good and has been well maintained since the last inspection. The careers co-ordinator works closely with the Careers Guidance Service and the Employment and Training Service to advise and support pupils' future plans. Officers from these services participate fully in lessons, give appropriate and objective advice and fully support events such as industry day. The careers library provides a satisfactory range of informative literature and

computer software which is readily available for pupils to research. All pupils in Year 11 attend individual interviews when career action plans are developed and are shared with parents. After some difficulties with organisation the opportunity for pupils to attend mock interviews has now been reinstated with help from the Education Business Partnership. Pupils identified with special educational needs in Years 9 and 10 are well supported through small group interviews. All pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity for work experience and this works well in developing their confidence and experience.

29. The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. By far the largest contributor is sport where many pupils take part in team games and use the specialist facilities of the leisure centre very well. Pupils from the school are prominent in teams and events at local, district, county and national levels. There is enrichment through the mathematics challenge for pupils in Years 8 and 10 and this is well supported. In design and technology, teachers support pupils well with lunch hour and after school clubs geared to the completion of project work. There are some field trips in science and geography, exchange visits in modern foreign languages and a range of other minor activities in other subjects. In music, 54 pupils participate in brass woodwind and singing groups and there is an annual carol concert. These are limited opportunities for pupils in what should be a thriving aspect of the curriculum. The number of pupils participating in after school activities is comparatively low. This is to some extent due to the need to catch buses after school, but late bus provision is made.
30. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. The provision appears in some planning materials, but it is not being pursued systematically within the curriculum, except in the areas of art and religious education. The school recognises that this is the case and the need for improvement and there is a planned staff development day to map the overall contribution of subjects for citizenship immediately after the inspection. This will address the provision for personal development. The provision for spiritual education is unsatisfactory. Too often opportunities to develop pupils' values and beliefs and to engender a sense of awe and wonder are missed. Similarly, inspection evidence does not show that opportunities are taken for periods of reflection, especially in tutorial sessions when there is no assembly. Good practice occurs in religious education in the area of exploration of feelings and in geography the study of natural phenomena such as volcanic activity and the tropical rain forest is designed to promote 'wonder' in the response of pupils. There is an assembly rota for each year group but the requirements of a daily act of collective worship are not met and this was a key issue at the last inspection. Opportunities were missed in using music as part of spiritual provision through the periodic assemblies. Links exist with moral development, where provision is satisfactory. Moral discussions are commonplace and good evidence in written work in English shows that pupils in Year 8 are exploring both sides in issues such as capital punishment and animal testing and similar themes are also strongly pursued in religious education. Issues of right and wrong and rich and poor are explored in design and technology and in geography, where very positive discussions of the use and misuse of resources and concerns over waste packaging take place. This provision, however, is not presented as part of a whole school framework and so there are areas where no significant inspection evidence was available.
31. The provision for social education is good. The good personal health and social education and General Studies, programmes involve preparation for future life and the inspection evidence revealed a very extensive amount of collaborative work taking place very purposefully in lessons. Relationships were generally good both amongst pupils and between pupils and staff and so this outcome is evidence that social development is a priority within the curriculum and its planning. In the special educational needs area, these good relationships are seen to have developed self-esteem and self-confidence. The provision of peer mentoring for Year 7 and 8 by sixth-formers is another positive feature of the provision because pupils reported favourably on its availability and impact. Social skills are also developed through opportunities in extra-curricular activities. Cultural provision is satisfactory. Pupils are introduced to national literary and arts heritage but opportunities to explore multi-cultural and international cultural domains are limited, except in art. In French and German cultural comparisons between the UK and European lifestyles feature and in religious education world religions are studied in a very extensive and sensitive manner, providing an awareness of the diversity of values and lifestyles which exist both within and beyond this country.

Sixth form

32. Overall, curricular provision is satisfactory. Access to the sixth form is open but the proportion of pupils staying on at the school is low, given the size of the year groups in the main school. A few pupils come to the sixth form from other schools, as there is much competition for students in the area. Courses are largely academic and geared to AS and Advanced level qualifications. These courses are well matched to the needs of students and build well on prior attainment at GCSE. Students can choose to study from a traditional range of subjects, extended to include computing, business studies and media studies. However, these additional subjects are offered at advanced level, rather than through the GNVQ qualification route. The school continues to meet the needs of a small number of students with special educational needs effectively within the range of courses offered.
33. Students are given the opportunity to improve their grades in the core subjects if necessary by re-sitting GCSEs. There is good timetable provision for all students in the key skills of communication, information and communication technology and the application of number, as part of the general studies programme. All students in Year 12 undertake a work experience placement. Whilst these are valued, only in art and modern foreign languages are these geared especially to vocational opportunities. The links for work experience placements in business studies with industry and commerce have still to be developed. There is also a weakness in a lack of adequate recreational physical education. This was a weakness at the time of the last inspection and has not yet been addressed. There are few planned opportunities for extending the experiences of gifted and talented students. However, in mathematics some extension work is done after school to meet the needs of those students wanting to study the subject at university.
34. Extra-curricular activities are geared largely to sporting activities and in these many students are successful. There is a good programme of general studies that includes good opportunities for guidance on careers and preparation for higher education applications. The curriculum fails to meet statutory requirements for religious education, a key issue from the last inspection, and progress has been unsatisfactory. Within the formal curriculum there are no opportunities for an enrichment programme in physical education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Staff generally know pupils well and pay good attention to their individual needs. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive, and although there are some inconsistencies, most feel confident that staff are readily available to assist with any problems. Satisfactory procedures are followed to monitor pupils' academic performance and personal development and to ensure pupils' safety and welfare. The procedures for assessment are good and contribute well to the progress and standards that pupils achieve.
36. Assessment practice has improved since the last inspection and the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are now good. A wealth of data is well analysed and used to monitor pupils' progress, inform support needs and to agree targets for improvement. The analysis of this data and the flow of information to the departments are good but not all subjects and pastoral staff are using the data rigorously to ensure that the appropriate level of support is given to each student. This criticism is also applicable to the new assessment policy. The emphasis is on the progress made by pupils, on helping them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and upon target setting to help them improve. The policy addresses the issues raised in the last inspection report and accompanying staff development has focused discussion upon the use of assessment for both summative and formative purposes. It gives teachers guidance on assessment, sets out clear procedures and seeks to enable students to understand and to take part in the assessment process. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning to meet the differing needs of pupils across the school is satisfactory. Work has begun to support teachers in using the data on pupils' prior attainment results in standard tests to identify the priorities for planning and to set targets. Good assessment and the use of assessment occurs in design and technology, science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, religious education, business and art. The new marking policy is good and is an integral component of the assessment policy. Students' achievements are identified and recorded. They

can identify their strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement are set. However, there are inconsistencies in the use of the marking policy both within and between faculties. The targets indicated by the marking do not always relate to the learning objectives and inform pupils of what they need to do to reach a higher level in National Curriculum tests or a grade in GCSE examinations. Diagnosis of and provision for the individual needs of students is satisfactory. There is an impressive record of individual students' attainments, the analysis of which clearly identifies any special needs. Good strategies, for example, are in place to support the minority of pupils with English as an additional language. The processes effectively identify gifted and talented pupils.

37. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Early identification is good and close liaison exists with the main feeder primary schools to gather information prior to pupils transferring to their new school. Visits to the new school are arranged for pupils and their parents and carers and the special educational needs coordinator keeps families fully informed of the special needs programme. Efficient testing in basic skills takes place in Year 7 and extra help is targeted where needed. Teaching assistants run fast-track reading programmes during morning registration and there is a lunchtime club that helps pupils develop their social skills and supports vulnerable pupils. There are four periods in the week where a special needs teaching room is used as a drop-in centre for targeted pupils who require help with coursework. There is also support from an inclusion worker, a counsellor and the behaviour support service. Liaison between subject areas and the special needs team is becoming more effective and this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning since the last inspection.
38. The Code of Practice works well and pupils with a formal statement of educational need have good provision. Targets are reviewed regularly with pupil and parent or carer and with the local agencies fully involved. Good documentation is kept and regulations regarding the conduct of annual reviews are met. The school's commitment to inclusion is emphasised and college links help pupils who are at risk of exclusion to raise their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by individual education plans which provide clear targets for achievement and behaviour. The school has good strategies for the diagnosis of individual learning needs and most pupils make good progress through withdrawal into small groups in the Drop-in Centre. In classrooms pupils with learning difficulties are less well supported.
39. Through good induction arrangements pupils in Year 7 receive good support from form teachers and the head of year to help them to settle quickly. Effective links exist with primary schools to ensure that data is received and analysed. Wherever possible, form teachers move up the school with pupils and the good relationships which develop have a positive effect on pupils' progress and achievements. Satisfactory records are kept by form teachers and heads of year about academic performance, attendance and behaviour. Regular meetings are held to discuss pupils giving cause for concern. The good programme of personal, social and health education is thorough and comprehensively encompasses all key personal development issues in a five-year programme. During this programme all pupils encounter a range of modules designed to make them feel safe and to build up their personal skills and awareness, including a range of moral and social issues including sex education and drugs awareness. This programme is taught by form tutors and there are strengths and weaknesses because of variation in the quality of teaching. All pupils have access to school counsellors for additional advice and support with personal problems.
40. Satisfactory procedures are in place to monitor and promote good behaviour. The implementation of procedures is often inconsistent and of insufficient strength to ensure that the behaviour of a minority of pupils does not disrupt lessons and the general life of the school. As an integral part of the guidance and support programme the school conducts an attitude survey in Years 7 to 11. Satisfactory procedures are followed to monitor and eliminate bullying or harassment, but some younger pupils are not always confident that issues are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. Parents have expressed some concern about the inconsistent way in which bullying is handled. The school keeps records of all incidents of inappropriate behaviour. The inspectors agree with parents' concerns about the inconsistency of the school's system of commendations and awards and this has not yet been improved since the last inspection. The school recognises the need to review the current reward system to ensure that it is used more consistently to promote pupils' self-esteem and celebrate achievement.

41. Procedures for monitoring child protection issues are satisfactory. A deputy headteacher is the trained designated person with overall responsibility and regular meetings are held with staff to ensure that all are familiar with procedures. All issues are well documented and recorded. A number of staff are qualified for First Aid and the school has good procedures which are well followed when accidents occur or when pupils become ill at school. Regular fire drills are organised when the buildings are evacuated. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good in the main school. The school works hard to achieve the good level of attendance which is well above the national average. A computerised system of recording has recently been introduced for Year 10 with plans to extend this system throughout the school.
42. The health and safety policy is followed satisfactorily with regular risk assessment of the site including fire safety. During the inspection a number of pupils spoke of avoiding the toilets altogether and this is considered a health and safety issue. The inspection confirms that insufficient consideration is given to ensuring that toilet facilities for pupils are kept in a hygienic state and are decoratively well maintained and supervised. In art, there is a dangerous low level caging surrounding the kilns and lack of ventilation in the ceramics room. During the inspection attention was being given to repairs on the roof of the main building and safety was well applied.

Sixth form

Assessment

43. The approaches to assessment mirror the comments above for Years 7-11. The arrangements for assessing students' attainments and progress are effective and appropriate assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow awarding body requirements. As in the main school, activity can be improved to improve students' predicted grades consistently. Diagnosis of and provision for the individual needs of students is good. Where practice can be improved is in the use of assessment data to guide curricular planning.

Advice, support and guidance

44. The overall aspects referred to in the above paragraphs are equally applicable to students for their overall care. Guidance and support for sixth form students is good with satisfactory access to library facilities. Students value the help and support they receive from staff but would like more access to computers and a work centre for private study and independent learning. There is effective advice and support for students in their application to higher education. Procedures for tracking the attendance of students in the sixth form are unsatisfactory and give cause for concern. Students are expected to sign themselves in and out of their area, but a significant number fail to do so which limits the school's knowledge of their whereabouts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and this has been well maintained since the last inspection. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education provided but a significant number do not feel that the school works closely with them, yet feel comfortable to approach the school to discuss any problems or to request information. Although there are some differences in approach from teachers and heads of year, they are generally readily available to speak with parents, many of whom make regular contact to discuss progress and issues of concern. The contribution of parents to learning at school and at home is good and most parents consider that pupils make good progress. The inspection agrees with parents that there are inconsistencies in the homework timetable and the way in which this is organised. Most parents assist the school in signing personal organisers each week, but there is inconsistency in the use of these as a communication between home and school. Parents of pupils with special education needs are genuinely encouraged to maintain close contact with the co-ordinator and their views are taken into account during the process of identification and assessment.
46. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. Parents and carers for pupils in each year group receive a report and have the opportunity for a consultation evening annually, meeting the statutory requirements, but some parents are concerned that this is insufficient to enable them

to be well informed about progress. The quality of teachers' comments in setting specific targets for improvement and the identification of strengths and weaknesses is broadly satisfactory. The annual 'Attitude Survey' of all pupils provides parents with helpful information about progress and how this is affected by attitude and behaviour. A pastoral consultation meeting is arranged for parents of pupils in Year 7 during their first term at the school. In Years 9 and 11 pupils and parents receive a helpful options booklet followed by a consultation evening to discuss the next stage. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed and support programmes and techniques are explained in detail to assist them in a partnership in pupils' learning. The monthly 'Parent Post' newsletter provides news of activities as well as information about such topics as the school's marking policy, examination news and the website. The heads of year produce separate informative termly newsletters for parents.

47. The Friends of Rushcliffe are a small group of parents who actively support the school by organising a range of fund-raising activities. The school's liaison link member of the support staff has worked with the Friends to organise subject evenings for parents but these have not always been well attended. The efforts of the Friends have raised a considerable amount of finance which has assisted the school in the provision of the new Learning Resource Centre. The amount of support for the group has recently diminished but at present their activities continue.
48. The annual reports to parents do not meet the statutory requirements in that physical education, as a subject in Year 11, is not reported on. The Prospectus and Governors' Annual Report to Parents are well presented and meet the statutory requirements.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The headteacher provides strong, clear leadership and this has led to significant improvement in management since the last inspection. The governors have endorsed these improvements and their partnership with the head is good as seen through the effective strategic plan which is in place. Governors play a full part in the overall leadership and management and the chairman is a regular visitor. They operate through an effective system of appropriate committees and they are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Strategic planning pays attention to the main aspects for improvement save that some aspects of the overall environment, for example, the amount of litter, quality of the toilets and general cleanliness of the site, are not included as key areas for improvement. The school's aims are being well met although some shortcomings in management, standards of behaviour and an element of underachievement limit their full realisation.
50. The headteacher manages effectively. His expectations have realised significant improvement in management and the achievement of targets. Leadership and management by other key staff is satisfactory as there are some shortcomings. Whilst there is effective practice there is inconsistency in how the vision is translated and the rigour with which initiatives are implemented, monitored and evaluated by the senior staff. Very good practice occurs in the monitoring of areas such as assessment and teaching and learning, but senior staff do not all operate as line managers with the same degree of rigour. This is also the case in a minority of subject leadership. There are examples of very good practice but shortcomings are present, for example in the coordination of information and communication technology to ensure that it is well used across the curriculum and effectively assessed. Management and leadership of special educational needs are good. The designated school governor for special educational needs is knowledgeable and there is better cooperation and understanding in supporting pupils with learning difficulties throughout the school than at the time of the last inspection. The policy and development plan include achievable targets to move the learning support programme forward. It is important that sufficient time is allocated to fulfil the management of special educational needs throughout the school in the light of the new Code of Practice. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy is in place and all pupils, from whatever background or level of attainment, have access to the curriculum with the opportunity to develop potential.
51. The school was last inspected in 1996 and the overall improvement has been good. Examination results have risen and there is a better level of challenge for higher attainers. The quality of teaching and procedures for assessment has been improved, although there are still some

shortcomings. Sound progress has been made in improving the accommodation. Computer resources have been well developed and although the application of knowledge and skills across the curriculum requires further development. . Where progress has been unsatisfactory is in meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. The school still recognises that it has the potential for even further improvement, a view that is endorsed by inspection evidence.

52. The quality of financial control and administration is now very good. Since the last inspection good systems have been put in place and the requirements of the last audit report have been very well addressed. The approach by the governors' finance committee, linked to the good partnership with the headteacher and financial administrative staff ensure that the principles of best value are well defined and applied. Funds allocated to the school under special grants are effectively applied and used. The significant balance in the budget is earmarked for building work. In relation to the standards being achieved, the overall good quality of management and the improvements made since the last inspection but taking into account the shortcomings made in this report the school is giving good value for money.
53. The school is adequately staffed with sufficient experienced and qualified teachers to match the demands of the curriculum. The staffing provision for special education needs and for AS and A-level courses is good. Staffing expertise to teach the full range of topics within the music curriculum is unsatisfactory. During the last year new staff have been appointed for business studies, English, mathematics, technology, physical education, psychology, humanities and science. The special educational needs coordinator and the team of learning support teachers and teaching assistants all have qualifications and work closely together. The number of learning support staff is too low to ensure good support in classrooms. Administrative staff are well deployed and make a strong and efficient contribution to the day-to-day running of the school. Their management and leadership is good and the recent appointment of a pastoral secretary is proving to be a good development in relationships and contact with parents.
54. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection accommodation has deteriorated and many areas are in a poor state of repair internally and externally. There is an on-going programme of maintenance work to the buildings. Although it is recognised that the site and Leisure Centre is an open access to the community the amount of litter allowed to accumulate, particularly outside the cafeteria and the deposits of chewing gum on carpeted areas, is unsatisfactory. Dining and social facilities are poor. The recent fire damage to the art department has resulted in a poor environment in which to study. The work of the business studies department is limited by the cramped amount of space available. Some pupils and parents have expressed concerns about the poor state of toilet facilities and availability of drinking water. In the overall fabric, there is wet and dry rot around window frames, damage to ceilings because of the ingress of water and generally poor decoration. Many potentially hazardous areas were noted around the site where paving is broken resulting in uneven surfaces.
55. Overall the learning resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory and of sufficient quality. Resources for art have suffered because of the fire damage. Resources to support the teaching of business studies for older pupils are unsatisfactory. Storage space is adequate in most areas and provides reasonable access to resources by pupils and teachers. Accommodation and resources for special educational needs are good, particularly in the provision of computers to enhance learning. Significant progress has been achieved since the last inspection in computer resources which are close to the national ratio of computers to the number of pupils in the school. Access to computers is satisfactory in the main school although not all departments are making full use of the resources.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

56. The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The head of sixth form leads and manages well ensuring that most aspects of care are effective. Judgements on the good use of assessment and the overall quality of guidance have been made earlier in this report and they have a positive influence on the progress of students. The courses available meet the needs of the students and the relatively low retention rate from Year 11 reflects local competition. The sixth form is cost effective.
57. Shortcomings in leadership and management are the fact that insufficient direction is being given to ensure that issues are reviewed and resolved through a partnership with senior staff. Although the General Studies programme contains a strong ethical component, the school is still not complying with statutory requirements to provide a focused religious education programme. No opportunities exist for a core physical education programme. Issues relating to the quality of accommodation, consistent monitoring of teaching and learning and opportunities for students personal development, through their involvement in the life of the school, are not addressed. Only a small minority of students completed the questionnaire. These students, and those who talked with inspectors, report that they enjoy school and would recommend their sixth form to others. However, they do feel that the overall advice that they receive and the range of activities could be developed. Most importantly they feel that insufficient consideration is given to their study facilities.

Resources

58. The overall accommodation for teaching reflects that for the main school. The sixth form common room is adequate in size for the number of students but it is poorly furnished and there are inadequate facilities for private study. Access to computers in the area is limited and this hampers the opportunities for independent research and study. Resources for learning in subjects are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

- i. Improve the overall leadership and management so that:
- there is consistent and rigorous monitoring of initiatives and of teaching and learning;
 - standards are addressed for the behaviour and attitudes of a minority of pupils;
 - the quality of the environment is improved; and
 - the use of computers in subjects across the curriculum is extended.

(Paragraphs: 2, 11, 12, 21, 40, 44, 49, 50, 54, 55, 62, 63, 64, 71, 80, 110, 114, 115, 129, 132, 133, 136, 139)

- ii. Improve the opportunities for pupils' personal development by extending:

- the range of activities for spiritual and multicultural work; and
- the range of extracurricular opportunities.

(Paragraphs: 29, 34)

- iii. Meet the statutory requirements for:

- Year 11 reports;
- a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students.

(Paragraphs: 48, 51, 140)

iv. Addressing the health and safety issues in:

- art;
- for footpaths around the school; and
- the quality of the toilets.

(Paragraphs: 42, 49, 54, 87)

Sixth form

Raise the overall standards in leadership and management by:

- improving the quality of opportunities for students' involvement in the life of the school;
- meeting the statutory requirements for religious education;
- improving the arrangements for registration;
- providing better facilities for independent study; and
- providing enrichment for leisure and recreation.

(Paragraphs: 15, 44, 51, 56, 57, 58)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	168
	Sixth form	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	6	39	75	37	8	2	1
Percentage	3.5	23	45	22	5	1	0.5
Sixth form							
Number	4	17	16	7	0	0	0
Percentage	9	39	36	16	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than 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	1202	171
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	99 (total school)	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	188	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	96

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	126	121	247

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	89	96
	Girls	99	89	96
	Total	175	178	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (82)	72 (79)	78 (80)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (39)	50 (60)	47 (48)
	National	31 (39)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	94	85
	Girls	89	89	95
	Total	151	183	180
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (83)	74 (72)	73 (76)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (35)	45 (48)	40 (43)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	102	115	217

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	56	97	99
	Girls	76	107	111
	Total	132	204	210
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (58)	94 (94)	97 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.1
	National	39.0

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

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

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

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			
Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All
School	19.2	21.3	20.5
National	17.8	18.6	18.2

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	11
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	7
Indian	49
Pakistani	49
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	1
White	1162
Any other minority ethnic group	15

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	3	0
Indian	8	0
Pakistani	8	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	72	1
Other minority ethnic groups	6	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

Education support staff: Y7-11

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	433

Deployment of teachers: Y7-11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	
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Average teaching group size: Y7-11

Key Stage 3	25.9
Key Stage 4	24.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	24

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 /2001
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	£
Total income	3,471,144
Total expenditure	3,556,691
Expenditure per pupil	2,639
Balance brought forward from previous year	363,208
Balance carried forward to next year	277,660

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1373
Number of questionnaires returned	408

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	57	10	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	51	13	3	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	50	13	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	52	19	6	2
The teaching is good.	24	61	7	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	49	20	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	48	10	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	44	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	16	49	23	7	5
The school is well led and managed.	29	50	8	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	55	8	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	42	20	8	13

There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors agree with parents and carers that standards and teaching are good and that the majority of pupils do have good attitudes. They also consider that there is effective leadership and management but inspection evidence shows that there are shortcomings. Insufficient evidence was available to substantiate the fact that parents feel the school does not work with them. Although there are some differences in approach from teachers and heads of year, they are generally readily available to speak with parents, many of whom make regular contact to discuss progress and issues of concern. The presentation of one annual report meets requirements, although they do not contain a report for physical education in Year 11. Inspectors support the views that there is a need to improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils and the procedures for homework. Whilst there is a good contribution of sporting activities, the range of extra-curricular activities requires review.

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

- Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis from Year 7 and they develop these skills well.

Areas for improvement

- Raising achievement by developing the monitoring and evaluation of lessons.
- The spiritual dimension in lessons.

59. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year olds in 2001, results were in line with the national average and below results in similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were better than in English. The results in 2001 were below those in 2000, which was the high point over four years and analysis shows that the pupils who took these tests had high prior attainment for their ages. When pupils come into the school their attainment levels in English are in line with the averages at the expected and higher levels, so this means that they achieve satisfactorily during their first three years. The attainment gap between boys and girls is similar to that found nationally, with girls outperforming boys. GCSE results in English in 2001 were above average and 8 per cent higher than in 2000. The English literature results were a little lower than the English results. The trend has fluctuated over time. Girls achieve better than boys, by a similar margin to that found nationally. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results in both English and literature represent satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11 and reflect the overall provision for teaching and learning.
60. Standards of work seen by 14-year-olds during the inspection were above the national average and higher than those achieved by last year's group. Achievement over the first three years for this group has been satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 9 write detailed, technically accurate pieces. They can adapt their writing effectively for different situations and readers and learn basic techniques of literary analysis. The work of pupils in Year 8 shows a good range of writing. It includes extended, confident writing on the subject of capital punishment, analysis of how Charles Dickens creates suspense and tension in 'The Signalman' and the use of allegory in two of William Blake's poems. Lower attaining pupils develop their writing for different readers and purposes, although it sometimes lacks detail and technical accuracy. They can make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. Higher attaining pupils can express their ideas orally confidently when speaking in different situations and use varied vocabulary, although lower attaining pupils lack confidence in expressing their views, particular in more formal circumstances.
61. From inspection evidence, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are generally achieving standards which are above the national average. They learn how to employ skills of literary analysis skilfully and write extended pieces accurately, in a lively and imaginative way. They can use textual quotations well and they clearly enjoy studying literature. Some interesting essays on Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' were seen in which pupils were able to see below the surface and discern Priestley's intentions. They quoted well from the play to back up their ideas. Middle attaining pupils generally write accurately and use a good range of vocabulary appropriately. Lower attaining write less detailed pieces and tend to 'tell the story' rather than analyse its features. Pupils' speaking in formal situations is in line with that which would be expected nationally overall. More able pupils express their views clearly and confidently and adapt their speaking for different situations and audiences successfully. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with others, from entering the school until they are 16. Whilst pupils who are particularly gifted in English do not have special work planned for them, their progress is

satisfactory and they are able to achieve the highest grades. There are currently three pupils in the school who are at an early stage of learning English. Provision for them is good. There is no difference in achievement between boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

62. Inspection evidence shows that teaching and learning over time are satisfactory. In just over half of lessons seen, teaching was good or better. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed. When lessons are good or very good, teachers have firm control over the ways in which pupils behave, they plan for a variety of tasks and activities and the pace is good, maximising use of available time. In good lessons questions are used effectively to challenge pupils to think deeply and make connections between ideas. In one very good lesson, Year 10 pupils were looking at the theme of responsibility in Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls'. Pupils learnt a lot about the characters and themes in the play because the climate for learning was so good. The teacher had meticulously planned the lesson to include a variety of activities, to use time to the full and to interest and motivate pupils very effectively. When teaching is unsatisfactory, or indeed, satisfactory but not better, lessons lack pace and impact. Low level disruptive behaviour occasionally prevents good concentration. Lessons also lack a sense of energy and vitality and teachers' explanations are sometimes unclear. Homework is generally used in a satisfactory manner to extend learning in lessons.
63. On the whole, pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy the subject. Whilst behaviour is largely satisfactory in lessons, at times pupils are noisy and, if unchallenged, are easily off task, which can affect the quality of learning. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils' casual attitudes and behaviour were not dealt with firmly enough by the teacher and as a result they did not learn as much as they could have done in the lesson. Where the climate for learning is good, pupils behave and concentrate well. In a Year 11 lesson of lower attaining pupils, the teacher's calm, reassuring manner and careful planning clearly had a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and as a result enabled very good learning.
64. The department has started to use performance data to assess how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. Teachers usually mark pupils' work thoroughly giving helpful development points and recognising good work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 generally know what National Curriculum level they are currently working at and Years 10 and 11 know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level and targets for improvement. The department has rewritten the schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 in the light of the requirements of the literacy strategy. These are detailed and helpful and provide good guidelines for teaching knowledge and skills. There are planned opportunities for pupils to use computers to help them learn and these are starting to have an impact. Pupils are introduced to linguistic and literary analysis effectively. There is a requirement to study literary texts from other cultures in the GCSE syllabus, but there is room for developing this further across the school and for drawing out in particular issues with a spiritual dimension in lessons.
65. The new literacy strategy for Years 7 to 9 is underway and teachers have had the necessary training in the techniques and this emphasis on developing pupils' skills is starting to have an impact on standards of writing and reading. Whilst teachers of English are instrumental in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically. Particularly effective work was seen in modern foreign languages, where there is an emphasis on accurate spelling and grammatical constructions, and in religious education, where teachers place good emphasis on appropriate vocabulary. There is good library provision which is effectively used in lessons and by pupils during their own time.
66. The head and deputy head of department provide sound leadership and management between them. They receive good performance data from senior managers that they are starting to use to pinpoint underachievement and to set individual pupil targets. There is room to develop this further. Systems are in place to monitor teaching, although these are not having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Both drama and media throughout the school are developing well. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

The school makes **good** provision for mathematics.

Strengths

- Above average attainment and good achievement.
- Good leadership and management.
- Good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in teaching.
- Use of computers.

67. In 2001, the results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average with a high proportion of pupils reaching the upper levels. Attainment was higher in 2000, reflecting those pupils' higher levels of attainment when they joined the school. In recent years, attainment by 14 year olds has been generally comparable to that of pupils in similar schools. Standards are rising at a better rate than nationally. Boys' results in 2001 were higher than those of girls'. These differences correspond with pupils' attainment at the age of 11. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language overcome difficulties in a short time. Along with pupils with special educational needs, their achievement is good. Ethnic minority pupils also make good progress. Standards of attainment in mathematics on entry to the school are broadly average and from these results, the achievement of pupils by the age of 14 is good.
68. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils achieving A* - C grades in GCSE examinations was above the national average in 2001. These results correspond well with the levels attained by those pupils at the end of Year 9; overall achievement is satisfactory. The difference between boys' and girls' results was similar to that found nationally. The achievement of both boys and girls is satisfactory and high attaining pupils achieve well, especially girls. In Years 10 and 11, pupils from ethnic minorities or for whom English is an additional language make good progress and those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
69. From inspection evidence, the standards being attained by pupils currently in Year 9 are above average in all aspects of their work. They use and apply mathematics well. Most can identify patterns and describe them algebraically. They solve equations reliably and interpret graphs with confidence. The most capable understand and use trigonometry to calculate sides and angles in right angled triangles. Many of those who find learning difficult can identify special quadrilaterals and describe their features but some of these pupils have not mastered numeracy skills sufficiently for them to readily handle simple calculations without counting aids. Standards of numeracy are generally satisfactory and with few exceptions, such as handling time intervals in French, sufficient for the needs of other subjects.
70. Above average standards are sustained in Years 10 and 11. GCSE coursework is good and pupils manipulate algebraic expressions confidently. The higher attaining pupils handle algebraic fractions skilfully and interpret cumulative frequency distributions well. Many pupils can solve inequalities using graphical techniques and develop geometrical and trigonometrical understanding. Pupils represent statistical data well and calculate parameters accurately, including those of grouped data. However, they are less confident when interpreting their meaning. A very small number of pupils have a hesitant and inaccurate recall of tables that hampers their progress. Almost all pupils have a positive attitude to learning and work conscientiously, building on their work in earlier years, so achieving well by the end of Year 11. Some pupils, not always those who find the subject difficult, have a poor attitude and some become disinterested, not completing course requirements, and they underachieve.
71. Overall, teaching is good. This is particularly evident in Years 7 to 9 where lessons begin with challenging teaching of numeracy. The quality of teaching, however, is uneven. There is too wide a gulf between the best teaching, which is excellent and the least effective, which is unsatisfactory. Some pupils benefit from stimulating lessons, conducted at a brisk pace. In these, teachers have high expectations, challenge pupils individually by direct, searching questions and exercise firm but good-humoured control. In some other lessons, teaching is

pedestrian and pupils are not given sufficient challenge. In some cases this contributes to deteriorating behaviour. Support for lower attaining pupils in mixed ability classes is good but infrequent.

72. Very good teaching is characterised by clear expositions, punctuated with well-chosen and well-directed questioning, conducted at a brisk pace that demands pupils' close attention. In the sense that it does so for all pupils, it exemplifies inclusive practice. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher revised earlier work spanning a wide range of topics. When the focus was a technique that some pupils had mastered, the teacher required these pupils to provide carefully reasoned explanations. This not only deepened their understanding and provided a good model for others but ensured the full participation of all pupils. In a Year 7 introduction to the subtraction of negative numbers, the teacher captured pupils' interest with an imaginative activity. Probing questions prevented pupils' attention from wandering from the key mathematical ideas, stimulated their powers of reasoning and promoted understanding of abstract concepts. This was equally true for the lower attaining pupils in the group. In some lessons, teachers have low expectations that lead to insufficient challenge; there is an overall lack of pace and pupils make slow progress. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils well capable of adding and subtracting fractions requiring the determination of common denominators were required to go through a slow moving analysis of examples of simpler cases, only experiencing productive challenge late in the lesson. Furthermore, by this time, the misbehaviour of disinterested pupils was distracting others.
73. Generally, pupils' positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning. This enables many to make very good progress in well taught lessons. However, there are a small number of pupils who deliberately undermine the working atmosphere of their lessons. Some, including higher attaining pupils, do so in ways that show disrespect for teachers and little consideration for their fellow pupils.
74. The department is well led and managed. This has ensured good improvement since the last inspection and has led to steadily rising standards in recent years. The current subject leader has clear, challenging and realistic ambitions for the department. He has already introduced changes that have led directly to higher standards in pupils' work. This is evident in the work of Year 9 pupils. He has the support of a committed team who work well together. They have made a good response to the numeracy initiative and prepared a comprehensive programme to supplement the main scheme of work. Arrangements for the use of the school's good computer facilities are not yet sufficiently well-established for this basic skill to be widely evident in pupils' work. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the department are securely established and well directed towards raising the quality of provision for all pupils.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards reached in national tests and GCSE.
- Good teaching which enables pupils to achieve well.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Consistent match of work to meet the differing needs of the pupils.
- Implementing plans for literacy and numeracy support.

75. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 for each of the past four years, have been well above average compared with all schools nationally. In 2001 results were above average when compared with similar schools. Generally, pupils have attained better in science, at both the expected level and higher level for their age, in the national tests than they have in English and mathematics. Girls have achieved slightly better in science than boys, compared with the respective national averages for boys and girls. Results have improved at a rate similar to that nationally. A much higher proportion of Year 11 pupils enter for GCSE double award science in 2001 than nationally. They achieved significantly better results than the national

average, with almost two-thirds of pupils gaining a grade in the range A* to C, compared with half nationally. Both boys and girls achieved results significantly above their national averages and the results were in line with the overall performance in their other subjects. The results were better than in the previous two years. The 2001 GCSE results indicate that the faculty has been successful in ensuring that the above average pupils achieve well and results at A* and A grades were above the national average.

76. Pupils currently in Year 9 are attaining standards which are well above average, showing improvement since the last inspection when they were average. Standards in each part of the science curriculum are developing well and the weakness in experimental and investigative science found at the time of the last inspection has been successfully addressed. Most pupils are making predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding. Pupils generally make good gains in knowledge and understanding and in reporting and recording scientific observations. By the end of Year 9, most pupils understand the relationships between vibrations and sound. They understand that sound travels in the form of waves and can explain in simple terms the difference between amplitude and frequency. Most pupils have a good knowledge of the human reproductive process and can explain the changes at puberty for both sexes. Most lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are achieving at least satisfactory, and often good, standards. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Teachers help pupils to develop their literacy skills by giving them confidence in using basic scientific terminology. Pupils' numeracy skills are generally good overall. Computer skills show good improvement.
77. Standards achieved by Year 11 are well above average, reflecting previous examination performance. By Year 11, pupils are writing clear and detailed accounts of their investigations that show good understanding of how to tackle scientific questions through laboratory work. Most pupils show a good understanding of forces. They mostly have a good understanding of functions within the body's organs. In their work on sound, there was good recall of work done in earlier years as they came to understand how a microphone converts sound into electrical energy.
78. Most pupils have positive attitudes and generally work hard. Overall, boys and girls both achieve equally well and make good progress. Occasionally, where management of a minority of lessons is not fully effective, or the work set does not meet differing needs, a few pupils, especially boys, distract each other and underachieve. Pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those who come from minority ethnic backgrounds are well supported and achieve well.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, although there is variation from excellent to poor teaching. The greatest variation is found in Years 7 to 9, though teaching is good in these year groups overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work with confidence, thus addressing the issue from the last report. Planning is good overall and teachers generally have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and work. Teaching explanations are clear and new concepts are carefully taught step by step, with the result that pupils develop their understanding, as well as their knowledge of science. Time is well used for learning. Relationships are generally very good and teachers usually manage their classes successfully. In the best teaching, lessons begin with plenty of questions to find out how well pupils have learnt previous work and lessons finish with a review of the work covered to ascertain how well learning has progressed. Much of the marking of pupils' work is good as it shows them what they need to do to improve, as well as grading the piece of work. The use of homework is satisfactory. It generally follows on well from class work so that learning can continue between lessons, although teachers do not always explain it thoroughly. There are some shortcomings in a minority of lessons which slow the rate of pupils' learning. While planning is thorough in terms of what pupils should learn, this is not always followed through well enough into work and resources which stretch all pupils sufficiently. Work set does not always meet the differing needs of pupils sufficiently. There is inadequate use of questioning techniques to establish exactly what pupils know and understand of previous work before moving on. These lessons sometimes finish without drawing together and consolidating the main points which should have been learnt. The principal weakness which led to unsatisfactory or poor learning, was ineffective management of the pupils' behaviour - some showed poor attitudes to their work and lack of

respect for their teacher and other pupils. Overall, however, teaching is good, as is further evidenced by the analysis of pupils' work over time.

80. Lesson planning indicates the intention to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, but this is not carried out consistently and the provision is satisfactory. Recently, the faculty has made good progress in developing the use of information and communication technology. The overall provision is satisfactory. The books and folders of Year 11 pupils contain only word processing and, occasionally, the use of computers for research, but pupils now have regular opportunities to use appropriate software to enhance their scientific understanding. The use of temperature probes by a class of Year 9 pupils, who were studying the effect of body size on the rate of heat loss, was a good example of this work. The science technicians are very effective in ensuring that equipment and resources are ready and in place for the start of practical lessons, thereby making their contribution to pupils' overall good learning.
81. The head of faculty, appointed since the last inspection, is leading and managing very well. In the relatively short time since her appointment, she has developed a sound understanding of what needs to be done to maintain the present very good standards and to bring about further improvement. The management plan contains appropriate priorities, arising from use of information gathered through observation of teaching and analysis of test and examination results. Planning for teaching and learning now includes appropriate attention both to experimental and investigative science and to information and communication technology. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Another important aspect of this has been the upgrading of five of the 11 laboratories. The remainder need to be brought up to the good standard of refurbishment, as do the rooms used by technicians for their work and for storage.

ART AND DESIGN

The provision for art and design is **very good although currently affected by difficulties in accommodation.**

Strengths

- Results in GCSE examinations.
- The quality of teaching.
- Assessment of pupils' work and monitoring of their progress.
- The very good behaviour and positive attitudes of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The development and use of computers.
- Resources including the use of visits and visiting artists.
- Health and safety of the kiln and ceramic area.

82. Teacher assessments show that standards by the age of 14 are above average for that age. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was well above national averages. Results were particularly good for boys, who closed to within five percentage points of girls. All pupils gained a pass, which is better than the national figure. Over the past three years results have risen steadily and in line with national trends.
83. Pupils enter the school with standards of achievement broadly in line with the national average. The very good teaching of the well-planned curriculum enables pupils to make very good progress, so that by age 14 the standard of their work is above average. Pupils' painting, drawing and modelling skills have been well developed from Years 7 to 9 and they have learned about the life and work of artists such as Van Gogh, Seurat, Monet and Picasso. They have explored Islamic patterns and masks from Africa, India and North America. In a very popular and well-planned project on gargoyles they learn the historical background and develop paper mache modelling skills that lead to visually striking results. A small class of pupils who have special educational needs benefits from a simplified curriculum and teaching adapted to the primary model. They construct a paper collage, cut it into a jigsaw pattern and learn to mix

paints to reproduce parts of their collage as a painting. They make very good progress against both personal and lesson targets. By Year 9 pupils can control texture and form in their drawings, learning to model through light and shade in their observational work. Higher attaining pupils make extensive notes in their sketchbooks as they design and construct a shoe from scrap materials. They draw on their knowledge of the history of shoe design they have studied and the very good skills demonstrated by the class teacher. Lower attaining pupils lack the fine motor skills needed to construct and decorate a finely finished shoe design, but their work is visually striking and generally well constructed. The opportunities for visits to art galleries and the use of visiting artists are underdeveloped, as is the use of information and communication technology.

84. By age 16 pupils have followed a well-organised GCSE course and their achievements are well above average overall. They make very good progress over Years 10 and 11, building on skills that have been well developed in earlier years. They explore different media and art techniques, producing some exciting multi-media compositions that demonstrate a range of skills, often developing work from observational drawings. Lower attaining pupils struggle with the challenge of 'hard edge' graphics in their work, but they persevere, learning to improve their control over brush and paint. In Year 11, the research and investigation skills of pupils are challenged by the GCSE course work and they write up very good personal studies on the work of artists such as Rodin, O'Keefe, Chagall, Lichtenstein, Gaudi and Escher. Appropriate attention is given to written work by teachers to ensure that it is well presented for the examination. Some excellent work was seen that developed from photographic studies and computer enhancement of natural forms, into very imaginative mixed media relief studies.
85. Pupils enjoy lessons and generally behave well and concentrate on their work. They put much creative effort into their work and talk confidently about what they are doing. On occasion a small minority lose interest in the lesson, but teachers are firm on any potentially disruptive behaviour and the pupils settle back to work. The large majority are well motivated and keen to rise to the challenge of the high standards expected of them.
86. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is consistently very good in Years 10 and 11. An excellent lesson was seen in Year 7, which enabled the pupils to explore the different brushwork and use of colour seen in the work of impressionist and expressionist painters. The teacher's excellent knowledge, understanding and skill in this area of painting set high standards for the class and they responded by producing very effective colour studies from the secondary sources they were given. The excellent management of the lesson, in a physically restricting classroom, is a testimony to the hard work that teachers have put in since the fire of last term. Lessons are very well planned from the very good schemes of work. They are prepared well and commence with an introduction to set out the objectives of the lesson. 'Gallery' sessions are used to bring pupils together to sharpen their critical thinking skills, although these are sometimes teacher dominated, not allowing sufficient freedom for pupils to express their perceptions of their own, or others' work. All teachers are practising artists who have an excellent knowledge of their areas of work. They demonstrate their own technical skills, which raise the achievement of pupils by modelling the skills required in different processes. They enjoy very good relationships with pupils that allow a relaxed, but purposeful environment for learning to be established, in which very good progress can be made in an enjoyable, industrious atmosphere.
87. This is a strong, successful and improving department, which has made a very good improvement since the last inspection. The department suffered serious accommodation and resource damage in a fire at the end of last term. This has led to a re-organisation of accommodation, which creates considerable pressures on staff and pupils, in particular when the larger classes have to use the temporary accommodation provided. Some GCSE work was lost and much was damaged. Staff and pupils have worked hard to recover and redress the damage to work, in a situation made more difficult by the now dispersed department. To their credit they have maintained high standards of teaching and learning and continue to have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Current predictions indicate further improvement on the already high standards of attainment. Work seen during the inspection supports these predictions. The positive attitudes to work seen in Years 10 and 11 are a testament to the strength of the departmental leadership and the consistently very good teaching.

Accommodation is understandably poor and resources for learning, having suffered from the fire damage, are currently unsatisfactory. There is a dangerous low level caging surrounding the kilns and lack of ventilation in the ceramics room. The head of department has altered this year's development plans, to focus on the process of re-designing and rebuilding the department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards that are consistently above the national average.
- The quality of teaching which is consistently good and in many lessons very good.
- Good assessment linked to National Curriculum levels.
- A team commitment to improvement and development.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The challenge for gifted and talented pupils.
- Better emphasis on designing ideas generated by pupils in Years 7-9.
- The use of computer aided design to strengthen work in information and communication technology.
- Strategic development planning.

88. In the past three years formal teacher assessments show that standards by the age of 14 were above average. The percentage gaining higher levels was also above average except in 2001 when the percentage of higher grades fell, reflecting a higher proportion of low prior attainment in this cohort of pupils. At GCSE level the standard of attainment is above average. GCSE results in 2001 were above average for A*- C and for A*- G grades. Standards have improved slightly year on year over the last three years, but in 2001 the percentage of A*-C grades fell just short of the department's target, although the proportion gaining A*- C in textiles technology was well above average. However, pupils' grades overall were similar to the average grades obtained across all their other subjects. Girls achieved higher standards than boys in a similar proportion to that found nationally.
89. The standard of work by Year 9 is above average overall and boys and girls achieve equally well. The above average standard is common throughout Years 7-9. Achievement is good in all aspects taught – resistant materials, food technology and textiles. Pupils encounter consistently good teaching as they move through different units of work. Most have a good understanding of the design process, understand the purpose of a design specification and have good practical skills. Drawing and graphical skills are well developed, but more emphasis needs to be placed on developing the selected final design idea, if standards are to be further improved. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language achieve good, and often very good, standards.
90. Standards are above average in Year 11 in GCSE courses in all the material areas. The consistently high grades achieved by pupils at the age of 16, across all the courses studied, reflect the quality of experiences in Years 7 to 9. Schemes of work are providing good progression because teachers are building on previous learning very effectively. Consequently design and practical skills are well developed and enable good progression to be made on specialist courses in Years 10 and 11. Inspection evidence indicates that the standard of work in food technology is good. If this standard is carried through to the GCSE examination in 2002, grades in food technology will come into line with the higher grades found in graphic products and resistant materials courses.
91. Attitudes, values and personal development are almost always good and often very good. Pupils enjoy the highly practical nature of their lessons and respond well accordingly. Pupils want to learn and show a commendable degree of interest and enthusiasm. They build good relationships within class and with the teachers. Behaviour is almost universally good, but at

times a small minority of boys can be disruptive, especially in Year 10. Pupils have good personal skills and are given the opportunity to use these in planning their own work and learning to work independently, as they move through the school.

92. Since the last inspection standards have improved because there is better continuity and progression between units of work in different materials. Teachers have developed the schemes of work and through them, made the learning much more specific. Each unit now has a clear assessment structure linked to National Curriculum levels. Pupils are assessed using these criteria and the extent to which they are working to their potential, as described by their ability profile. The use of information and communication technology has increased. All pupils now experience two modules using computer aided manufacture. A control unit has now been developed and will be taught during the summer term. There is a need for pupils to have more experience with computer-aided design and to ensure that all pupils include ICT in their GCSE project work. Monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning are now established. Progress since the last inspection is good.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the large majority of lessons teaching was good or better and often very good. This picture is consistent across the year groups. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. All teachers have very good specialist subject knowledge that comes through continually in their work. For example, in a textiles lesson the teacher had provided a wide range of material samples. Pupils, led by the teacher, analysed these to gain a full understanding of how various weaving techniques are used with different yarns, to produce a cloth with particular characteristics. They effectively developed their knowledge and understanding to see how different cloth is more suited to particular garments. In all lessons pupils are clear about what is to be learned and tasks are set which ensure that there is a good pace to learning. In a graphics lesson, pupils had to learn how to construct mechanisms for use in a 'pop-up' book. The teacher gave a high quality demonstration before setting a series of tasks to be completed before the end of the lesson. Assessment is also used effectively to promote high standards. For example, in a Year 7 food technology lesson pupils worked on a formally assessed task. They had to carry out the cooking of the product they had designed and present it with other items as part of a packed meal. Each pupil was assessed on the quality of the product, their cooking and organisational skills and their ability to present the finished packed meal in an attractive manner. The results clearly showed the quality of learning, through very good teaching, over several lessons.
94. In the small number of lessons graded satisfactory, technical aspects of the lessons are sound. However, learning is limited because the teaching strategy is too narrow, giving pupils little scope for thinking or demonstrating what they have understood. In the best lessons the school's policies for equal opportunities and inclusion are fully implemented and all pupils are able to make good progress.
95. Leadership and management are good. The head of faculty provides supportive leadership and maintains the strengths of the subject whilst encouraging growth and development. He is well supported by the departmental team. The technician is effective and ensures that resources and equipment are to hand when required. Areas for development identified in the last report have been largely addressed. Systems for monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning are in place. The department development plan is linked to the whole school development plan, but is for the one year only. The plan lacks quantitative success criteria against which it can be monitored and evaluated. The data exists in other documentation, but needs to be brought together in a single plan. The plan needs more detailed costing and to be a projection for more than one year. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is limited. Teachers tackle issues as they arise, but there is no specific planning as part of the schemes of work.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Examination results are well above national average.
- Very good teaching.
- Good detailed tracking and analysis of pupils' progress.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- More consistent matching of tasks to the needs of individual pupils.
- Extension of fieldwork opportunities.

96. National Curriculum teacher assessments for 14-year-old pupils in 2001 were broadly in line with the national average, a slight decline since the previous year. In both years girls performed better than boys. Performance in the GCSE examinations has consistently been above the national average for the last three years. Results in 2001 were well above average for both A*-C and A*-G grades. There was a particularly high proportion of the highest grades A* and A. In most years girls have performed better than boys by a margin similar to the national gender difference. Inspection evidence reveals that on average, standards are above age related national expectations in Years 9 to 11, with a significant minority of pupils well above. This represents good progress since pupils entered the school.
97. By age 14, inspection evidence shows that attainment is above average for most pupils and that they achieve well. This represents attainment above that suggested by the most recent National Curriculum teacher assessments. This difference is in part due to the more sophisticated end of unit tests now being used, which assess attainment more accurately than formerly. All pupils have good map reading skills. Higher attaining pupils can for example, describe and explain the conflict of interest between different groups when there is a threat to the environment from developers. This ability to discriminate was seen in a Year 9 lesson on the development of a holiday resort in Australia. In the same lesson, lower attaining pupils could describe, but were less sure in their explanations, of the effects of human intervention on the environment. Although these pupils have weak literacy skills, the department has worked hard to improve them. As a result, many of these lower attaining pupils produce fluent written work. Pupils from Year 7 onwards are skilled in using computers to select information from databases.
98. By age 16, most pupils achieve well and their standards are above average. Most pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. Higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of geographical ideas, such as differing levels of economic development between northern and southern countries. In their course work they test hypotheses using statistical methods to analyse their fieldwork data. Less competent pupils present this data clearly in graphs, but are less sure in analysing it. As with 14 year olds, lower attaining pupils produce good pieces of written work. In their enquiry work, all pupils are adept at searching for information via the Internet. There is no obvious gender or ethnic difference in observed attainment in any year group.
99. Overall, teaching is very good. It is never less than satisfactory and over 60 per cent is very good or excellent. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, an infectious enthusiasm for the subject and sensible allocation of time to different activities. Pupils' response to this very good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. They behave well and stay on task. They relate well to their teachers and support each other in collaborative tasks. In a Year 8 lesson, on tropical rain forests, pupils were challenged to develop their own questions after perusing detailed fact sheets. Their observational powers were put to the test by the requirement to watch a video with the sound turned down. They were assisted in these tasks by the orderly atmosphere in the room and the helpful guidance they received in the use of source material. In this and many other lessons, teachers develop pupils' literacy skills through the use of writing frames. The department teaches literacy and thinking skills very well. It now puts much more emphasis on the teaching of concepts rather than factual information alone. Lessons start with a

clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling pupils to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. Teachers' good inclusive questioning ensures that the whole class is actively involved. In a small number of lessons teachers spend too much time talking at the expense of pupils' activity. This reduces the opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Content is not well matched to the capabilities of individual pupils in a small minority of lessons. When tasks of graded difficulty are set, learning progresses well.

100. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, as do those of different ethnic origins. Their teachers know them well and work hard to meet their individual needs. No group of pupils is disadvantaged in lessons. Work is marked regularly with helpful comments pointing the way forward. Regular homework provides good reinforcement to classroom learning.
101. The department has responded well to the last inspection report. The response from pupils in Years 10 and 11 is much improved, as is the quality of teaching. The use of assessment to guide the planning of the curriculum has also improved. Although fieldwork opportunities have increased, they still need further expansion. The standard of pupils' displayed work is very good. It improves the appearance of classrooms and encourages others to emulate it. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and thinking skills has had a marked effect on raising standards. There are examples of good use of information and communication technology through word processing, data handling and research, although the department recognises that further development is required.
102. These improvements are a direct result of very good leadership and management. The department has succeeded in maintaining the status of geography as one of the strongest subjects in the school. Application of the realistic and achievable targets set in its improvement plan should ensure the subject's continued popularity and success.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The most recent GCSE results are well above the national average.
- The overall quality of teaching.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology resources.
- Updating schemes of work and the departmental handbook.
- The quality of accommodation.

103. Teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall. Girls are achieving better than boys. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were well above average at A*-C grades, with a good proportion achieving A* or A grades. Results have improved significantly since the last inspection.
104. The inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils of all levels of attainment make satisfactory progress in their first three years in the school, including those who are gifted and talented, those with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language. Pupils develop a range of historical skills, including the interpretation of appropriate historical evidence and data, the analysis of difficult historical issues and the understanding of chronology. They can use a wide range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, videos, information and communication technology and a comprehensive range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is secure and pupils can work individually, in pairs and in small groups to develop their understanding of history. In Year 7 pupils can search the Internet for evidence on Pompeii and they can sift and sort effectively. Pupils' historical understanding is extended in Year 8 by studying a facsimile of the Montea

letter in the Gunpowder plot episode. By Year 9 pupils can work effectively in groups in a role-play situation to accurately analyse the outcomes of the Versailles peace treaty. The teachers know the individual needs of their pupils and are able through good classroom management, clear objectives, well-planned activities and targeted help, to support effective learning.

105. Standards by Year 11 are above average. Pupils make very good progress throughout Years 10 and 11 as they build upon the foundation of skills and knowledge acquired in the earlier years. By the end of Year 11 pupils have developed a good understanding of the reasons for the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and why there was little organised opposition to the regime. Poster and cartoon evidence is closely analysed and pupils show a high level of skill in their evaluation of this evidence. In these years there is a greater emphasis on developing extended writing skills, the making of their own notes often from visual materials and the interpretation and use of primary and secondary source material. Pupils are encouraged to make oral contributions and to discuss complex issues such as the impact of the mediaeval church on the development of medicine. There is good evidence of pupils looking at a range of arguments and coming to a balanced conclusion. Thorough examination preparation is built into the framework of the lessons in these years.
106. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Years 7 to 9 a significant proportion is good with some very good features and all teaching is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 some teaching is very good and all teaching is good. There is considerable evidence of well-planned and well-structured lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject, which they can share with the pupils. Most lessons begin with a question and answer session where the teacher is able to prompt and support good pupil learning. A comprehensive variety of classroom activities promote the development of a wide range of learning skills.
107. The atmosphere in classes is purposeful and ordered and pupils can successfully acquire historical skills. Historical ideas are clearly and thoroughly explained and developed and there is good evidence of teachers using their knowledge, enthusiasm and teaching skills to develop pupils' understanding at all levels of competence. Teachers are particularly good at ensuring that the pupils, of all levels of attainment, learning needs and ethnic heritage, can make an active contribution to the lesson in their individual oral work, their group involvement or in their written work, especially in their interpretation of historical evidence.
108. Overall the standards of behaviour are good. The strong relationships observed in the department underpin effective learning and the good acquisition of skills. Good interpersonal relationships are one of the strengths of the history department. Many examples of pupils listening carefully to each other were observed and co-operation, amongst pupils in all years, is high. Pupils enjoy history and this is very evident in the lessons seen.
109. The management of the department is good. The head of the department gives clear leadership and has a sound knowledge of how the department can build upon its existing strengths. At present there is a good staffing match in experience, expertise and qualification and there is stability within the team. The departmental handbook however needs to be developed and improved and the revising and extending of the schemes of work needs to be completed. Homework is set regularly and marking supports progress, learning and achievement. Teacher comments are supportive and encouraging particularly in the lower years and then become more diagnostic in Years 10 and 11. The assessment procedures are effective and there is good knowledge amongst most pupils about their own progress and what they have to do to improve their existing standards. Attention however needs to be given to reports to parents to include information about historical skills and the targets needed for improvement.
110. The specialist classrooms support an effective learning environment with attractive displays of historical material and pupils' work although one room is on a separate floor, which hinders communication. Resources are satisfactory. Although there is some good practice, there is a limited use of information and communication technology. The improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Improvements have been good in strengthening teaching quality and in raising the attainment level at GCSE. The key issues identified in the last report have been partly addressed. Monitoring and evaluation systems have been strengthened and some of the

formal assessments have been rewritten. Writing frames have been introduced and pupils work in different groups. Resources reflect more closely the different learning needs of the mixed ability classes. Access to computers has improved but there is more to be achieved in this area.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good level of resources.
- Access to qualifications in GCSE and Key Skills.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching.
- Raising standards in the application of knowledge, understanding and skills, including the better use of computers in subjects across the curriculum.

111. Teacher assessments show that standards by the end of Year 9 are average. Results in the GCSE short and long courses in 2001 were well below the national average.
112. By the end of Year 9 pupils' standards are average. Pupils can demonstrate the application of their skills in the use of word-processing software, databases, spreadsheets, presentation software, desk-top publishing and the Logo language. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of current Year 11 pupils is close to the national average. Attainment in the Key Skills course, which replaces the GCSE short course, is in line with course expectations. In a Year 11 GCSE lesson pupils learnt how to mail merge a document letter with a database customer file and produce sample output. Work undertaken in the lesson was underpinned by an examination question which required knowledge of the essential features of this technique and the standard of answer required. Most pupils demonstrated good skills and confidence in applying their knowledge to the examination question. There was no noticeable difference in the achievements of boys and girls and pupils identified with learning difficulties and English as an additional language often make satisfactory progress. Pupils who have greater confidence, often acquired from their experience at home, make particularly good progress in the application of their knowledge, understanding and skills.
113. The teaching in the timetabled, specific information and communication technology lessons is satisfactory overall, with examples of good teaching but also a significant minority of teaching which leads to unsatisfactory lessons. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject. Most lessons are well planned with clear objectives. The best lessons have a good structure and use methods which require pupils to work towards higher levels. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils used a spreadsheet to present the numbers and colours of 'smarties' in tubes of sweets which each pupil had brought to the lesson. They pooled their results and used the 'autosum' feature to add the columns. The sequence of work then required pupils to plot a graph to show variation and to then merge the graph with a word-processed report. Pupils demonstrated confidence and good skills in undertaking this task and the quality and pace of their learning in this lesson was good. Whilst teachers are aware of the needs of pupils and provide individual guidance, the planning of lessons does not consistently include specific references to particular groups of pupils, for example those with learning difficulties, or gifted and talented pupils. Where teaching in a significant minority of lessons is unsatisfactory, planning is weak and the methods chosen do not promote effective learning. In such lessons the tasks set were not well matched to the differing needs of the pupils. In a Year 10 lesson pupils were asked to write about the analysis stage of their project without a working understanding of how to set about the work and there was insufficient exemplification by the teacher. In consequence many pupils were unable to make progress and did not complete the task by the end of the lesson. Thus, there is a clear need to improve the overall quality of teaching in the department.
114. The school is undertaking the national New Opportunities Fund training to support the development of teachers' skills. This is already having a positive effect on expertise and confidence and teaching across the curriculum is also satisfactory. Weaknesses occur in overall coordination and in ensuring that all opportunities are effectively assessed in all subjects to

enhance pupils' standards. The use of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory but there are instances where opportunities for pupils to apply their skills are underdeveloped. Pupils have the opportunity to access computers outside of their lessons through the Learning Resources Centre, and a significant minority do so. In science, design and technology, geography, art, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, good practice is developing. Effective use occurs in design and technology to control models and CAD-CAM software to control a lathe, although the department has recognised the need to develop the use of computer aided design further. In science pupils use data loggers to monitor temperature and light levels. Access to the Internet is used for research in art, geography and modern foreign languages and in music computers are used in composition work. There is room for improvement in English, mathematics, history and physical education.

115. Improvement since the last inspection, where the need for improvement was a key issue, has been satisfactory. There have been significant developments in resources. The ratio of computers-to-pupils is close to the national average and there are now four well-equipped rooms and a Learning Resources Centre. The school network now has effective broadband connections and is well managed by two able technicians. Statutory National Curriculum requirements are now met in Years 7-9, including requirement to deliver data logging and control. The progress that pupils make has improved. Attainment in Year 11 for all pupils is improving with the switch to a Key Skills course. Leadership and management have some weaknesses. Resources are effectively managed but there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation. It does not occur with sufficient rigour to improve the quality of teaching in discrete lessons and to ensure that the use of computers in subjects across the curriculum is effective. The strategy to plan or review teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and the best practice that exists is not shared sufficiently to raise standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The high standards attained in GCSE French.
- The quality of teaching.
- The assessment of pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The raising of standards in German.
- The extension of good assessment practice to Years 10 and 11.

116. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 for modern foreign languages as a whole show continued improvement over the last three years, based on government-recommended tests. In 2000 and 2001 over 80 per cent of pupils were achieving at or above the expected level, with a significant rise in those attaining the higher levels. Recent changes to the National Curriculum attainment levels, however, make comparison less reliable, in that the tests are now less closely aligned to the criteria.
117. Results in French at GCSE are very high in comparison to national averages. In 2001 over 80 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C, with 100 per cent gaining grades A*-G. Girls performed better than boys, but both were well above the average. At the time of the last inspection results were in line with the national average. French has registered a significantly positive performance in relation to other subjects in the school. Results in German were significantly higher than the national average at the time of the last inspection, but over the last three years the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C have been broadly average. This relative decline has been mainly due to staffing difficulties, which disrupted the continuity of teaching and had a demoralising effect on pupils' performance. A comprehensive review undertaken by a newly appointed head of German has resulted in the adoption of an action plan and strategies to reverse the decline.

118. From inspection evidence, standards by the end of Year 9 are above average. Pupils in Year 7 are achieving well in all four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. They speak confidently and are consistently producing longer pieces of writing at a higher level. Many lower-attaining pupils have difficulty with accuracy in spelling and grammar, but communicate well nevertheless. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are progressing well, along with their peers, in the mixed-ability groups, owing to careful encouragement and inclusion by the teachers. By Year 9 lower-attaining pupils are achieving well owing to rigorous marking, and the setting of individual targets for improvement after each important piece of work. This whole-school scheme is having a significant impact on pupil attainment. However, these pupils, and some middle attaining pupils, have limited opportunities for higher-level extended work, and this limits their potential development. Higher-attaining pupils are confidently manipulating complex grammar and constructions in languages, speaking with confidence and accuracy and producing a high level of extended writing. The Year 9 pupils with the greatest educational needs are well catered for in a small set in French. The teaching and learning in this small group are outstanding. In one lesson, pupils recalled, as a group, the items practised in the previous lesson, based on booking holiday accommodation in a hotel and on a campsite. The level of retention was excellent, to the point of recalling accurately the questions used to ask what time breakfast is served, a task beyond some GCSE candidates. Pupils then circulated, working individually or in pairs on activities placed around the room, covering all the skills and representing different levels of challenge. The organisation was outstanding, pupils showed a determination to succeed, a strong sense of achievement, and an enthusiasm, which fully engaged them. The teacher and support assistant circulated, encouraging and guiding, ensuring understanding.
119. In Years 10 and 11 standards are average in German and above average in French. The high level of support for speaking and writing is making a positive impact on achievement. There is particular emphasis on how to improve the quality and range of language in order to obtain higher accreditation. Higher-attaining pupils in both years are achieving well above expectations in French in all four skills. Other pupils achieve less well, as they tend to be more restricted in the quality, variety and content of their extended work and written coursework. In German overall achievement is not as high, as many pupils still struggle to handle complex grammar and constructions accurately.
120. Teaching is good overall in both languages. A small proportion of lessons were very good and one was outstanding. All teachers are specialist linguists, have a profound knowledge of their subject and a high standard of fluency. They consistently use the foreign language in lessons and maintain a sensible balance in the use of English to check understanding, reinforce instructions or explain complex language patterns. In the best lessons careful planning recalls prior knowledge and proceeds to extend that knowledge at a brisk pace. Varied activities cover as many skills and directly involve as many pupils as possible and, by using different media, maintain pupils' interest and concentration. In a Year 7 French lesson, pupils were linking previously-learned time on the clock to a school timetable and subjects. There was a lively exchange of question and answer, in which all pupils participated, followed by tightly-timed listening, reading and writing exercises, which became more demanding and involved individual and pair work. Pupils were eager to succeed and were clearly enjoying the variety of tasks. Their level of success mirrored the mixed-ability nature of the group, as some pupils confused similar-sounding words ('deux'/'dix', 'quatre'/'quart'), and retained less of the previously-learned items.
121. Teachers know their pupils well, have high expectations of their performance and ensure that the work stretches their capabilities. Most pupils learn well, are eager to participate and there were few instances of a less than positive attitude in class. In a middle- to lower-attaining Year 11 German set, for instance, pupils were showing a determination to master complexities. They were practising the future tense, in preparation for a unit on future plans, by linking it into future activities in the week. From the basic pattern of a future tense sentence pupils were able to adapt the model to different persons of the verb and retain those along with the word-order pattern. The teacher set a steady pace and checked understanding with patience and encouragement, until he was able to challenge pupils further by bringing in the element of inversion of verb if they started the sentence with the phrase of time. He reminded them that they had covered this with the past tense and all pupils were quickly able to apply the rule to this

situation and write and speak accurate sentences using a very complex construction. There is a strong emphasis on enhancing literacy skills to aid comprehension of grammar and assimilate language patterns. Teachers encourage a positive approach to examinations, particularly in making pupils aware of the quality of work which will gain higher grades. Homework is appropriate and designed to extend and consolidate work done in class. Marking in Years 7 to 9 is frequent and thorough, but less consistent in Years 10 and 11.

122. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Some Year 10 and 11 pupils follow an approved alternative course, which can result in disapplication from a modern foreign language where appropriate. The department also offers trips to France and Germany, as well as recommending visits to French and German films at a city cinema to potential advanced level pupils. The development of opportunities for enhancing language skills through information and communication technology is well advanced. Every pupil has this opportunity once per half-term, as access to facilities is limited, but developments in the near future will extend the range and frequency of experience.
123. The marking and assessment of pupils' work and tracking of their progress is a strength of the department, although the effective scheme in Years 7 to 9 could be more rigorously applied to Years 10 and 11. Pupils are familiar with a whole school scheme, which reflects teachers' expectation and opinion of their individual performance on each assessed piece of work. From this individual targets for improvement can be set. The department also requires pupils to complete a record of achievement sheet to chart their general progress and establish agreed longer-term targets. Teachers hold accurate records of pupils' progress in major assessments and use them efficiently to set attainment targets and predict attainment levels and grades.
124. The department is well led and managed. There is a strong team spirit, a commitment to continued improvement and clear educational direction. There is good development planning and detailed schemes of work, which are constantly updated in the light of experience and new developments. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching follows the school's performance management system and takes place regularly. As yet, however, there is no opportunity for members of the department to share good practice by mutual observation.
125. Since the last inspection the department has acted on the criticisms. Those referring to marking, disapplications, the support of pupils with special educational needs, National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 and the use of information and communication technology have already shown improvement and been mentioned above. Numbers of boys in higher-attaining sets have increased and staff have received training in strategies to encourage boys. However, numbers vary from year to year and do not necessarily reflect a smooth proportional increase.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The good GCSE and other recognised national music examination results.
- The quality and range of peripatetic provision.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Retention for GCSE courses.
- Extra-curricular provision.
- Time allocation.

126. National Curriculum assessments show that standards by Year 9 are below average. In 2001 the proportion of pupils who gained an A* to C grade in GCSE was above the national average. The number of pupils entered was small. In Associated Board, Guildhall and Trinity College instrumental examinations, the 18 entries (12 boys and 6 girls) achieved significant success with one distinction, 13 merits and 4 passes.

127. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment is below average by Year 9. There are major variations in that those pupils who receive instrumental tuition achieve well but in a significant number of class lessons, achievement is unsatisfactory. This partly reflects the fact that the curriculum time allocated for Years 7-9 limits the coverage of the programme of study but requirements of the National Curriculum are being met and partly shortcomings in the quality of teaching. Standards on entry show a wide variation in previous experience. The pupils in Year 7 have a limited understanding of the appearance and sounds produced by instruments of the orchestra. The substantial majority have a limited understanding of note values and the elements of music. Year 8 pupils make limited progress in composing an 8 bar melody line with variations on the keyboard. A small but significant number of pupils have satisfactory performance and appraisal skills. The pupils in Year 9 make satisfactory progress in writing chord sequences to an 8 bar melody. They effectively improve their information and communication technology skills by recording their compositions on the keyboard and the computer. Higher attaining pupils have good theoretical understanding. They are confident performers on a range of instruments including cello, woodwind and guitar. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have only a limited understanding of staff notation, note values and the elements of music. Performance skills are limited and there is an absence of singing. Basic literacy skills are being developed as pupils use a range of technical words and expressions which are a feature of wall displays. An over dependence on work sheets limits the pupils' independent learning and opportunities for extended writing. Music makes a limited contribution to numeracy as pupils recognise patterns, sequences and rhythmic relationships.
128. There are currently no music classes in Years 10 and 11. This is a significant concern as it has implications for the breadth and balance of the curriculum and the overall quality of education being provided.
129. The majority of the pupils have a satisfactory attitude to music and enjoy lessons. The behaviour of the substantial majority is satisfactory. A small but significant number of boys in Years 7 and 8 whose behaviour is unacceptable, are holding back the progress of committed pupils in their respective classes. The pupils who receive instrumental tuition are strongly motivated. Pupils work well together particularly in composition and performance work. Music activities are all inclusive, involving boys and girls of all abilities. For the substantial majority of pupils relationships with each other and with their teachers are satisfactory and they handle with care the expensive instruments and resources they use.
130. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In a minority of lessons there is some very good and good teaching, but in a further minority of lessons it is unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. The teaching of small groups of pupils for instrumental tuition is good and class teaching is satisfactory. Teachers and visiting staff are accomplished musicians with a secure subject knowledge. They successfully impart much of their enthusiasm to the pupils who show a satisfactory interest and concentration. In the best lessons, planning is satisfactory and teaching objectives and learning outcomes are clearly identified. Time is effectively used to complete activities. In these lessons, care is taken to match the levels of work to meet the needs of individuals or groups. As lessons proceed work is effectively assessed according to the departmental policy. Pupils are aware of their individual targets and some are aware of their curriculum levels. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers' expectations are too low. The lesson objectives are unclear and the quality of learning is unsatisfactory. Class management is poor and pupils misbehave. Marking of the pupils' work is unsatisfactory overall.
131. Learning is satisfactory and the pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment in their understanding of theory and the elements of music. Composition and performance skills are effectively developed on the keyboard and other instruments. Insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to play their compositions in class and for other pupils to appraise their performances. The pupils are developing the use of computers to good effect when preparing their compositions. Higher attaining pupils make very good progress as a result of instrumental tuition.
132. Some gifted and talented pupils are making good progress as a consequence of high quality instrumental tuition. Up to 54 pupils participate in a wide range of brass, string, woodwind and

singing groups. Extra curricular activities, which are limited, make an important contribution to the pupils' knowledge and performance skills. A carol service at Saint Giles' church involves a significant number of pupils. These activities effectively contribute to the broadening of these pupils' musical experiences and compliment class lessons but opportunities are being missed. The quality of teaching makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development but the contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development has weaknesses. For example, opportunities for music to contribute to assemblies are being missed. Cultural development results from an effective study of European music and Indian music in Year 9.

133. Management of the department is only satisfactory. Pupils' progress has marginally improved in Years 7-9 but teacher expectations must be raised. There remain a small but significant number of pupils who do not treat the subject and lessons seriously. Schemes of work reflect the National Curriculum programmes of study and assessment procedures are being improved. The teaching rooms and practice rooms are drab and unwelcoming. Since the last inspection music has gone from the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and the potential for the development of music skills is being missed. Overall, the quality of teaching, use of computers and the sharing of a clear vision for the future need to be improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards in GCSE.
- Extra-curricular provision.
- Good response from most pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching.
- Attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils.
- Including the subject in pupils' reports to their parents.

134. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory in relation to attainment standards on entry to the school. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in GCSE is in line with national averages. However, predictions for 2002 suggest a return to the general trend of above average attainment.
135. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average and there are no significant differences between the performance of both boys and girls. By the end of Year 9 pupils have made satisfactory progress. They develop competence in basic gymnastic, basketball and soccer techniques. Their development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups, when developing basic techniques through Years 7 to 9. However, activities do not always allow pupils to develop their observation and assessment skills, so that they can be clear about what they can do and of what they are capable.
136. In relation to standards of attainment at the beginning of Year 10, achievement at the end of Year 11 is good for pupils in GCSE PE and satisfactory for pupils in core PE. Standards of attainment of pupils in core physical education lessons are in line with national outcomes and most pupils make satisfactory progress. Many pupils can develop basic techniques, as in basketball and transfer various passing and control skills into the full game situation. Differences in standards reflect the disruptive behaviour by a significant minority of pupils and teaching which has low expectations. In GCSE lessons pupils' positive attitude to their work means that they make good progress and achieve above average standards. While pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, the progress of higher attainers is sometimes restricted by a lack of consistency in the setting of challenging tasks and insufficient attention to their observation and assessment skills.

137. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons teaching is good. Teaching in examination lessons has higher expectations of the pupils and more challenging activities than in core physical education. The strengths of the teaching include good planning based on a secure knowledge of the subject, organisational skills, positive interaction with pupils and a commitment to pupils' moral and social development. This means that pupils can learn basic techniques through appropriate activities and in an environment which encourages learning. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are now in place, although the information acquired is not used consistently by all teachers in both curriculum and lesson planning. The quality of teaching needs to be improved in a significant minority of lessons because the objectives are not clear enough, neither are the intended outcomes and they are not always shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons. Further development of strategies to ensure that pupils develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills would enhance the pace of learning. There is also a need to ensure that non-participants are included in lesson activities. Pupils' attitudes to learning are sound and in some cases good. The majority enjoy physical education and participation levels are good. However, in some core physical education lessons the attitude and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils is so disruptive that it has negative affects on learning.
138. The department recognises the importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning. Provision is very good, with most team and individual activities being offered. Take-up is very good, with an open access policy in place. Competitive fixtures occur in many games and this adds to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The standard of performance in most team and individual competition is very good. The very good performance by some individuals has been recognised at area and national levels. A large number of non-specialist teachers help with clubs and teams.
139. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has made satisfactory progress in improving the monitoring of teaching and learning so that all pupils are involved in learning, especially pupils with special needs, since the last inspection. Assessment procedures now ensure that teachers know what pupils can do and are capable of doing. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Schemes of work are well planned and appropriate. The department is well organised and the department's handbook provides guidance on schemes of work, lesson planning and safety matters.
140. The opportunities for pupils to assess their own performance against success criteria, limits progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy, and the use of information and communication technology, is satisfactory and greater opportunities need to be planned to support teaching of these skills. Developing strategies, to reduce the disruptive behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, is needed to raise standards more quickly. The department does not report to parents progress made by Year 11 pupils in core physical education. Reports need to clearly convey to parents how pupils can make progress. Both indoor and outdoor facilities are very good as the school shares the on site community sports and leisure centre facilities. There are good resources, with good systems for storage and movement to learning areas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good GCSE results and high attainment throughout the school.
- Imaginative teaching which encourages interest and promotes achievement in lessons.
- Enthusiastic pupil responses.
- The use of computers.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of the programme of visits to places of worship.
- More consistency in pursuing incomplete work.
- More consistent use of subject-specific targets in assessment and in reporting to parents.

141. Teacher assessments show that standards by the end of Year 9 are average and improving. GCSE results in 2001 at A*-C grades were above the national average and all candidates secured an overall pass. This was achieved with a percentage entry which was double the national average. Two-thirds of those entered at this level were girls, who achieved slightly better than boys. Both achieved at a better level than their peers nationally. The 68 candidates had been allocated core curriculum time for the GCSE Short Course but had opted to invest further time in their studies to secure a full GCSE pass. In addition, results for a further 120 candidates, from the remainder of the year group in the GCSE Short Course, were in line with the national averages. These results cumulatively reflect a pattern of improvement from the last inspection when the school had only just begun to introduce the GCSE Short Course at Year 10 to a position where they now have exceptional results from fully entered cohorts.
142. By age 14 attainment is generally above average. The inspection evidence for Years 7-9 reveals that pupils have moved significantly into the attainment area of 'learning from religion' and this means that they are being drawn into the application of their knowledge rather than just acquiring knowledge on its own. The full range of world religions is covered. Pupils are applying their knowledge in such exercises as creating brochures for shrines. Assessment is gauged by using the school's humanities assessment levels scheme. This reveals that many pupils can exercise empathy and sensitivity of judgement and reflection in complex areas such as the incidence of racism and intolerance and can use research skills to inform their conclusions. High quality extended and reflective writing is commonplace and pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are equally achieving high standards because they can participate fully in the curriculum.
143. Standards are significantly above the national average by the end of Year 11. The inspection evidence shows that the pattern of development in Years 7-9 is being continued. Many pupils can effectively debate the complexities of the moral issues which confront modern-day religion. They produce extremely fluent written responses, using appropriate vocabulary. In Year 10, there is a small minority of pupils who do not seem able to relate to the importance of sensitive and moral issues.
144. Attitudes to the subject are extremely positive with most pupils being enthusiastic and interested learners, to the extent that their commitment adds momentum to the pace of lessons. This commitment is inspired by a very encouraging teaching and learning environment built upon extremely good relationships, within classes and with teachers. This means that achievement is generally good or very good because pupils can build up their expertise in a very constructive way over time. However a small minority of pupils do not respect this encouraging atmosphere and occasionally their interventions reduce the pace of lessons.
145. The quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection. The teaching and learning strategy is highly structured, with heavy emphasis on learning objectives, very effective and probing questioning and very careful individual support of pupils. Teaching strategies motivate pupils and are supported by strong teacher knowledge and careful resourcing. This enables pupils to develop their religious understanding to the levels of attainment reported above. This combination, strongly underpinned by praise, has created a very encouraging atmosphere in most classrooms. Teachers are seen to be checking pupils' understanding throughout the lessons. Very profound discussions were promoted on issues such as capital punishment and embryo research, and very high quality assessed work, on various world religions, also reflected the range and quality of the teaching. Information and communication technology is regularly used and this is also a significant development since the last inspection. Homework is regularly set. Marking is carried out regularly but the follow up of incomplete work is inconsistent.
146. The curriculum in Years 7-9 fully meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and in Years 10 and 11 meets these requirements through the GCSE courses. This is an improved situation since the last inspection. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of this curriculum are a strength within the school. This curriculum is well-resourced, both in the classroom and the Learning Resource Centre, but it is under-developed in its visiting of places of worship. Assessment is well-developed in that work is being assessed very accurately and pupils are being given a clear idea of their own strengths and weaknesses. However, it is

insufficiently developed in that the formative assessments do not consistently identify subject-specific targets for improvement. This is equally true of reports to parents.

147. Leadership and management are good. There was a good response to the last inspection and its planning for the future is equally thorough. This thoughtful leadership is based on teamwork. The result is that there is consistent practice throughout the teaching and learning programmes in all years and in the underlying policies by which the department proceeds. The absence of part of the job-share which leads the department has not diminished its output because structures were already in place to support supply, temporary and part-time staff. This leadership has the capacity to secure further improvement.

Drama

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

Strengths

- The very good quality of teaching.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work.

Areas for improvement

- Maintaining the progress that has been made to date in establishing and developing the department.

148. A new head of drama was appointed 18 months ago after a period in which it was not taught as a separate subject in the school. He has done a lot to establish drama, which is now taught to all Year 9 pupils and is offered as a GCSE option, although there are no results to comment upon.
149. Standards in Year 9 are average. The scheme of work is well developed. It ensures that pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of drama skills and conventions, such as 'still images', 'voice overs', 'hot-seating' and 'role on the wall'. Pupils learn an awareness of audience and how to create character and portray emotion. The scheme of work builds in differentiated activities to challenge the lowest and highest attaining pupils and indicates where there are links with other subjects.
150. Standards by the end of Year 11 in the option group are above average. In their preparation for their GCSE examination on a unit of work 'Worlds Within Worlds', pupils displayed good empathy and awareness of the key roles and issues.
151. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers' challenge and motivate pupils very effectively. This leads to pupils being interested and motivated in their work and making good contributions and bringing their ideas to fruition.
152. Drama is starting to have an impact on the wider life of the school, through a drama club, productions and trips and visits. This is a very positive development for the school.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Teacher knowledge and lesson planning.
- Good relationships between the teacher and pupils.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards still further.
- Developing a business studies suite with integral information and communication technology provision.

153. Results in 2001 GCSE examinations were below average at A* to C grades and average at A*-G grades. However the department experienced very severe staffing difficulties in 2001, which adversely impacted on the pupils' learning. These particular difficulties have now been overcome.
154. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average and reflect the improving situation. The inspection evidence shows that pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress, with very good supportive teaching, including those who are gifted, those with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties. Pupils develop a wide range of business skills including the interpretation of motivation theories, the manipulation of stock control methodologies and the use of quality circles. They can use a range of learning materials including worksheets, case studies and graphical data. Pupils have a sound understanding of key business terms such as 'Just in Time,' 'buffer zone' and 'self-actualisation'. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work, the workbooks are well organised and there are examples of practice examination questions. Pupils are being prepared well for the examination, which includes after school coursework sessions. The assignments are of a satisfactory standard and there is evidence of good use of questionnaires and the use of primary data. Information and communication technology is well used in the coursework and there are good examples of a wide range of information and presentational material used in this work. There are a good range of worksheets and supporting material.
155. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall. The range of teaching quality is however very wide. Much is very good and some is poor. The poor teaching is a temporary situation and is the last element of the difficult staffing problem from 2001. Once this has been resolved the quality of teaching has the potential to improve rapidly. With the very good teaching, classes are very well managed, with well-planned and well-structured material. Learning objectives are shared with the pupils and progress is reviewed at the end of the lesson to see how much has been achieved. Lessons are marked by clear exposition, supported by direct questioning and they are conducted at a challenging pace. Pupils make very good progress where the teacher includes frequent opportunities to reflect and to explain key ideas as in a Year 11 class where a practical exercise illustrated, very clearly, the advantages and limitations of 'Just in Time' delivery methods. The wide variety of teaching methodology encourages and develops pupils' business understanding and their overall enjoyment of the lessons. Good use is made of structured questioning and the involvement of all pupils in the class.
156. Teacher knowledge is good and this is reflected in the good organisation and planning of the lessons. Previous commercial experience is used to develop pupils' interest in the business sector and to make business studies lively and relevant. In the very good lessons there is a strong rapport between the pupils and the teacher and this underpins the enthusiasm the pupils have for the course. Support in these lessons for effective pupil learning is very strong. Pupils can work individually, in pairs and in groups. Very good teamwork exercises were observed in these lessons.

157. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department inherited a very difficult situation in September and has already made many major changes and improvements. She has developed an effective departmental handbook and has written a comprehensive scheme of work. A good assessment model has been introduced which gives clear information to the pupils about their progress and what areas they need to work on to secure further improvements. This accounts, together with the high quality teaching, for the rapid improvement in attainment during this year. Positive pupil expectations of their work and performance have been developed and relationships in the classroom have been greatly improved. The head of department has, in a short time, created professional and curriculum momentum and has set the department on an improving path.
158. The school has strongly supported the head of department to effect these changes, however there is still much to be done. It is recognised that standards can be raised. The accommodation is currently unsatisfactory as the department is situated in a non-specialist mobile classroom lacking a clear business-like environment. Although access to information and communication technology is currently satisfactory, the department does not have its own up-to-date network. As the planned expansion of the department occurs, access to computers is a major consideration to ensure that learning opportunities are enhanced. At present links with industry are limited; this has been recognised by the department and improvements are planned.

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

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

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	7	29	15	29	62	1.3	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	9	78	46	100	96	8.2	6.6
Biology	10	50	34	100	88	7.2	5.3
Business Studies	2	50	32	100	92	6.0	5.5
Chemistry	16	38	43	94	90	5.9	5.9
Communication Studies	18	56	31	100	93	7.1	5.5
Economics	6	33	36	100	89	6.7	5.5
English Literature	10	40	37	100	95	6.2	5.9
English language	19	32	30	95	92	5.9	5.3
French	6	50	38	100	89	6.3	5.6
Full Design and technology	7	0	30	100	91	4.0	5.4
General Studies	46	50	30	87	85	6.0	4.9
Geography	23	57	38	100	92	7.2	5.7
German	8	50	40	100	91	6.0	5.8
History	12	25	35	82	88	4.3	5.5
Mathematics	16	56	43	94	87	6.0	5.8
Other sciences	3	33	30	100	90	4.7	5.2
Other social studies	15	33	34	100	87	5.6	5.3
Physics	15	27	40	80	88	4.9	5.7
Sociology	19	26	35	84	86	4.5	5.3
PE Studies	2	0	25	100	92	4.0	5.1

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and biology, but chemistry, physics and geology were sampled. In chemistry, AS and A2 courses are taught in Years 12 and 13. The uptake to these courses is good. Results at A-level have generally been average over the last three years. In an AS level lesson, students were totally focused and listened intently to the very clear teaching of the structure and properties of a group of chemicals. Good use was made of resources, including molecular models and computer simulations, to make the three-dimensional structure of the molecules more readily understandable. Students responded well to very good teaching. Several of them asked pertinent questions that demonstrated very good understanding of the topic.

In physics, AS and A2 courses are taught in Years 12 and 13. The uptake for these courses in Year 12 is not as good as for biology and chemistry but groups in both years are of a reasonable size. Results at A-level have been generally average. In an A2 lesson on gravitational potential in a radial field, learning was very good. Information and communication technology was used very effectively in modelling the effects of the force of gravity in the field. Very good teaching revised basic knowledge very well.

In geology, examination groups in Year 13 are small. Results at A-level are in line with the national average and with the students' previous attainment levels. One lesson was observed. Good teaching of geological mapping techniques resulted in students successfully interpreting geological structures from the evidence presented.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average as students have developed good study skills.
- The subject expertise of the teachers is good, motivating students well.
- The very good attitudes of the students to their work.

Areas for improvement

- The depth of study in some aspects of the curriculum.
- More opportunities for students to make oral contributions in lessons to benefit their learning.

159. The inspection covered modules in mechanics, methods, pure mathematics and statistics. Judgements are based on lesson observations in mechanics and pure mathematics, together with discussions with Year 12 and Year 13 students and the scrutiny of their work.

160. The A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average for those students earning the higher A/B grades and above the average points gained. An equal number of male and female 16 students earned a grade. In 2001 the A/S-level results at the end of Year 12 were above the national average. Male and female students performed equally well. Twenty-two students completed the A/S-level course and 15 are currently continuing their studies in Year 13. The proportion of students who continued to the A2 from the AS level course shows a fall which reflects national trends.

161. Standards in Year 13 are well above expectations, following on from the well above average, achievement at AS-level by these students and indicating satisfactory achievement to date. They apply basic techniques in calculus with confidence, showing that their algebraic skills are secure. Standard integrals are not yet well known in pure mathematics but skills and confidence are increasing in their use. Students have a secure knowledge of basic vector algebra. Good learning is clear from the solution to statistical problems and in the proofs required in trigonometry. Students have developed good study habits and work well on their own or in pairs. Concentration skills are very good and students like 'to get it right', sometimes spending many hours in private study.

162. Students' attainment at the start of the A/S-level course in Year 12 was above that normally seen for this course, with most having secured at least a grade B at GCSE. They know that momentum is a vector quantity and they can successfully apply the appropriate principle for objects travelling in a straight line and so solve simple problems. Some students find further extension more difficult. Achievement is satisfactory and students have very good attitudes to the subject and work hard, completing many exercises in their efforts to improve.
163. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers' good subject expertise is used well in the teaching to introduce new work and to support individual students in their studies. Private study work is set at the end of every lesson that complements the work in class well. The marking of this work is minimal with the onus passing to students to seek support should they feel the need. This is a contributory factor to the development of good individual study habits on the one hand and the reduced numbers continuing with their studies on the other. High attaining students cope well with this arrangement. Teaching methods generally lack the open-ended questions which lead to whole class discussions and hence greater understanding of the subject. The lack of direct methods in the teaching limits consolidation of prior learning, pace in the rate of learning and interest in the wider aspects of mathematics.
164. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Teachers work well together, co-operating appropriately in the shared teaching arrangements. They meet students outside normal lesson times and work hard. The curriculum is broad and is generally satisfactory, lacking a depth of study to be any better. This is recognised implicitly by the school as one student is offered appropriate extension work by way of better preparation for a university course. The time allocated for teaching has been reduced following the introduction of A/S-levels, both by management on a regular basis and also by ad hoc arrangements within the school, such as work experience and school visits. Thus teachers are under some pressure to complete the scheme of work and so need to be much more effective in their use of time in lessons. The current individual learning processes are not efficient. There has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection and improvement is overall satisfactory.

Sciences

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

Strengths

- Results at A-level have markedly improved and are well above average.
- Very good teaching.
- Technician support to lessons and for students in lessons.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Testing the achievement of the learning objectives at the end of the lesson.
- Marking so that targets set, support higher achievement.

165. AS and A2 courses are taught in Years 12 and 13. There are currently two groups studying the AS level in Year 12 and one studying for A-level in Year 13. Students take AS re-sits in Year 13. This exercise is significant in that it enables students to improve their results and focuses them well on their A-level studies. The results at A-level in 2001 were well above average and represented very good improvement in results over the last three years, although results have been consistently above the national average. A significant number of students have exceeded their targets and their predicted grades. Results in 2001 for AS, at the end of Year 12, were below the national average but were in line with the students' previous attainment levels and with predictions based on these levels.
166. The standards being achieved at the end of Years 12 and 13 are well above average. In Year 12, indications are that results in the AS examination to be taken this summer will be improved on last year and that the number staying on to Year 13 will improve. Students research well in class and in their self-study units. They are confident in communicating their findings, use computers well both as a research tool and in their presentations and support each other very well as they work either in pairs or in groups. They can take notes quickly and accurately and

most keep very good records of their work. The students in Year 12 are mainly attaining at a level relative to their previous results, although a minority are achieving above expected levels. This was apparent in a lesson when students from both of the AS groups were being taught together. Their responses to the challenges presented to them by the teacher were impressive and there was a high level of intellect displayed throughout the lesson.

167. In Year 13, standards are above average, with students all achieving very well and often above their anticipated levels as indicated by previous results. All students are on course to achieve their predicted grades in the A-level examination to be taken this summer. In practical and other investigations, they can follow instructions very well, use the apparatus effectively, taking the necessary safety precautions, and record their findings accurately, always working at a good pace. The highest attaining students explain their conclusions very well and can evaluate experimental procedures and outcomes. All students are aware of the concept of a fair test.
168. Their knowledge, understanding and skills were demonstrated in a lesson when students were carrying out a practice practical assessment on digestion. They investigated the digestion of starch and fats and were asked to put forward and test three hypotheses. In this exercise they demonstrated very good pre-knowledge and understanding and made very good progress towards meeting all of the learning objectives in the time allowed, including the use of homework time. In another lesson they demonstrated good use of computers when preparing a revision presentation for the class and were researching very well using the Internet and written text. They had not used PowerPoint before but this was insignificant as all students learned very quickly. It is clear that most of these students have made very good progress in building on their Year 12 studies and all are on course to achieve at least their estimated grades with some middle achieving students attempting to achieve higher targets.
169. The quality of teaching is very good overall and at times excellent. There are several very good features that make teaching a strength of the department. These include teachers' subject knowledge and experience and the quality of planning which ensures that the differing needs of the students are met. Good consideration is given to opportunities to include the practise of basic skills, including information and communication technology and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The structure of lessons is always very good. Very clear learning objectives that the students understand are set out at the beginning of every lesson and a variety of activities match these. Pace is most often very good; teachers use time prompts very well and set targets. The learning objectives are most often achieved. Students are challenged by some very good questioning that secures very good progress. In an excellent lesson in Year 12 students presented their research findings on tuberculosis to other members of the group. This they did with confidence, their independent learning having been well structured by the teacher. At the end of each presentation the teacher effectively challenged the presenting student with some searching questions. Students were not phased and all made very significant gains in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers are very confident in their use of computers, as demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson when students were preparing their revision presentations for the physiology and behaviour unit. The instructions given to the students enabled them to be very quickly on task and the planned support given to the students by the computer technician was significant to the rate of progress being made in that lesson. Equally, planned support given by a laboratory technician during a practical lesson ensured that the necessary equipment was readily available. This activity raised the level of skills and enabled students to achieve their learning targets, particularly those of potentially lower attainment.
170. Teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject and there is a culture of seeking to improve standards. This has a very positive effect on the students whose attitudes and behaviour are always very good and sometimes excellent. Students appreciate the fact that marking keeps them informed of their progress. However, the targets set for them, as part of the whole school marking policy, are not always closely related to the learning objectives to further support achievement. At the end lessons, students are not always tested rigorously on their achievement of the learning objectives.
171. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is effective monitoring and evaluation by the team of its performance and effective action to secure improvements is taken. There is good use made of the assessment although it can be further improved. The

departmental management plan accurately identifies the priorities. Good progress has been made since the last inspection to raise standards and the quality of teaching. The teachers are well deployed and there is a very good level of teaching resources. The technicians provide very good support as they prepare for teaching and learning, as well as acting in support of students in their studies.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology (graphic products) was sampled. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory. There are currently seven students studying the subject at A2 level and five at AS level. In the 2001 advanced level examination, results were below the national average. However, all students passed the course and the grades obtained were in line with the prior attainment of each student, ranging from grade B to grade E.

The quality of teaching is good. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher effectively supported individual students who were tackling their practical projects. For example, one student needed the experience of the teacher to explore ways in which thin plywood could be glued and fixed to the curving frame of a day bed. There was a very good interchange of ideas before an experimental dry run was used to check whether the preferred approach would work and thus good progress was made. The standard of work ranged from potential grade A through to grade E according to the differing prior attainment of the students. In Year 12, the teacher used a recently marked piece of work to demonstrate to students the extent of the coverage of essential marking criteria in that project. Students were then asked to write a report that would indicate the targets needed to ensure full coverage through the second project. The students found the advice and guidance very helpful in focusing their work on the next project. The teacher also used the lesson very effectively in order to demonstrate to the more able students the extent to which they were operating below the potential shown at GCSE level.

BUSINESS

There are no subjects to comment upon in this section.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Resources.
- Students attitudes and response.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards.

172. Information and communication technology is assessed at GCE A level and through Key Skills Level 3. Attainment in this subject has risen from 1999. The 2001 results at A level were below the national average although the small number of candidates makes a comparison invalid. Key Skills is an integrated course which involves assembling a portfolio from work in subjects where opportunities are 'signposted' to use computer technology. Insufficient evidence was seen of pupils' work towards this award from which to judge students' progress.

173. Inspection evidence shows that the current Year 13 pupils are on course to attain at least in line with the national average. In practical lessons, students demonstrate good skills particularly when integrating the use of different applications. They have a good degree of self-sufficiency when undertaking their project work, which reflects good planning, clear understanding of the criteria, and having an overview of the stages in the development of their projects. Over time students have produced well-developed projects that are effective in each of the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation stages. Students have developed their designs through interviews and additional research, including a stock-ordering system, an inventory system for hire tools and a database for an estate agent. In relation to their prior attainment, students are

making satisfactory progress. Students respond well and benefit from the well-developed and friendly relationships which create a purposeful working climate.

174. The quality of teaching of A level computing is good. Teachers have an up-to-date technical knowledge of the subject, particularly in the newer areas relating the use of the Internet and networks. Teachers use good questioning skills and well-judged intervention during lessons, for example, in a lesson on developing a database project. The teacher discussed design criteria with individual pupils and emphasised the marking criteria that will be used. The quality of learning is generally good, although students are more confident when undertaking practical work than when participating in the theoretical aspects of the subject. Teachers do not always ensure that this area of learning is sufficiently developed although they generally ensure that work set is tailored to meeting differing needs. The marking of students' project work includes detailed commentary which outlines how further improvements can be made.
175. Resources for teaching and learning in this subject are good. The network of up-to-date computers makes available a full range of application software and electronic course materials. Students can make full use of these systems plus the benefit of email and use of the Internet for research purposes.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education in examination courses was the main focus for this inspection. There are no opportunities for sixth form students who are not taking an examination course to take part in practical physical education on their timetable. Some students take part in extra-curricular activities. This contributes significantly to their personal development and to the skill development of their chosen activities. As at the time of the last inspection there is no opportunity for the enrichment programme to include leisure and recreation on sixth formers timetable. This is still unsatisfactory.

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The attitudes and commitment of the students.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards through opportunities in personal studies.
- Timetable arrangements to ensure continuity of learning.

176. Attainment at the end of the sixth form in 2001 was below national averages. Results in 2001 were based on only two students who both achieved a D grade. Attainment in 2000 and was in line with national averages. Predictions for present A level students and inspection evidence suggest that attainment will be in line with national averages in 2002.
177. Inspection evidence shows that students in both Years 12 and 13 are producing work, which is of above average standard. Students across all levels of prior attainment in Year 13 are making very good progress. In discussions students make very good use of a wide range of relevant vocabulary. Students showed very good planning in preparing presentations, which demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their chosen sporting activity. They can analyse video material to identify appropriate presentation skills, which inform their own performance. All students in Year 12 have made very good progress since they started the course and they are achieving well. Students confidently make presentations of their findings to the rest of the group, for example, when they demonstrate a good understanding of the impact of drugs on performance. These they could accurately relate to a range of sporting activities. The higher attaining students demonstrate a wide technical vocabulary, which they apply accurately and effectively in both written and oral presentations. The lower attaining students show weaknesses in their knowledge of specialist language and use of technology when carrying out research and presenting data and conclusions. Students do not have the opportunity to relate their study to their own practical performance as part of their course work.

178. Teaching is very good. The most effective teaching involves high expectations and a good pace to lessons. This results in very good learning. Teachers ensure that students understand the intended outcomes of the lesson so that they know what they are expected to learn. There are regular opportunities for students to discuss their progress and set targets for improvement with the teacher. This is essential in order to enable students to plan appropriately so that they can improve their skills in their major sporting activities.
179. Students have a responsible attitude to their work and are enthusiastic. All students see the relevance of their own performance and make alternate arrangements, outside their timetable, to improve their skill level in their chosen activities. This is usually within extra-curricular activities or through local teams and clubs.
180. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The department has a good vision for the development of the subject. There is a need to address the timetable which means that some students are unable to attend all lessons and some physical education lessons take place after school, a situation which hampers progress.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects are taken in this category.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was for art and media studies both of which were fully inspected.

ART

The provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths

- The standard of attainment and exceptional achievements of students.
- The high quality of teaching.
- The very positive attitudes and maturity of students.
- The critical evaluation of students' work and the monitoring of their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Health and safety standards in the ceramics area.
- Resources and accommodation.

181. Standards at age 17 are above national expectations. The percentage of students aged 18 gaining grades A-B in the AS level examination in 2001 was above national averages and all students passed at grade C or above. The percentage of students aged 19 attaining grades A-B in the 2001 A2 examination was well above national averages. All students gained a good grade. The trend in A2 examination results has risen steadily over the past three years.
182. As in Years 7-11, the serious fire has adversely affected post-16 studies. Students have played their part in coping with adversity, accepting the restrictions imposed by the loss of accommodation and striving hard to reach the very high achievement targets set by the department. Current predictions indicate very good or excellent results in the forthcoming AS and A2 level examinations. Work seen during the inspection supports these predictions.
183. From inspection evidence some individual achievements in painting and drawing are exceptional, showing extensive background research and individually creative development. In Year 12 students' portfolios and work on display show clear evidence of extensive research into the life and work of their chosen artists. They use this research to develop their own work in the style of other artists or combine the styles in their own creative pastiche. Their multimedia work is very imaginative and painting is a strength. Annotation and personal studies are of a high standard. Students make careful notes as they work and re-draft their personal studies, often word-processing them for a final draft. Teachers correct grammar and punctuation in an effort to improve the overall presentation of their work for examination. Year 13 students are very highly

motivated, using much of their free time to continue with their artwork. They are self critical, seeking standards of achievement that will yield high examination grades. Very little three-dimensional work is undertaken at this stage, but skills learned in earlier stages are used effectively, for instance in making a very good Venetian style mask to a high standard of finish. They are happy to flout conventions, such as framing and finishing work, sometimes incorporating 'accidental' effects into their work, piercing through surfaces, or choosing unusual frames for their compositions. Textile work is bold and creative, some conceived as theatrical backdrop material or bed covers, using interesting combinations of the work of Andy Warhol and Georgia O'Keefe. They experiment with textile colours using screen and block printing, paper resist and painting with paint and toothbrushes. Students with special educational needs make the same excellent progress as others. In one case this has entailed struggling against difficulties, which has meant learning to work with the unnatural left hand. The sensitive and thoughtful outcomes of this student's work are an example to all students.

184. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work and are sufficiently well motivated to want to continue with it in their spare time. They are working very hard to keep in touch with the high targets set for them in the forthcoming examinations. They enjoy lessons and work well together in a rich and stimulating environment for learning.
185. The quality of teaching is excellent and never less than very good. Teachers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject areas and are themselves practising artists, able to demonstrate their own professional skills to students. In the classroom their 'light touch' teaching is appropriate, enabling students to develop their work independently, whilst benefiting from the advice on sources of information and technical and creative resources available to advance their learning. Excellent interrelationships characterise the department, especially noticeable when teachers and students have to work in the cramped rooms they currently have to use. The enthusiasm and energy of teachers rubs off on the students, creating an industrious, creative and enjoyable environment for learning. Teachers keep very good records of the progress of students and these are shared with students so that they are clear about how their work is progressing and what is needed to reach the high targets set for them.
186. The very good, strong leadership of the department has held the very good teaching team together. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Leadership has improved significantly, standards have risen and the qualities of teaching and learning have improved. The high standards set by the teaching team are a very good reflection of the aims of the school, which is served well by a department that achieves results that are consistently amongst the best in the school. The department is planning for more computers, plug-in hardware and appropriate software to enable students to improve on the exciting developments they have started through digital imaging and manipulation. Plans are being effectively developed to rebuild the accommodation and restore resources. There are colourful displays around the concert hall foyer and library. The main entrance foyer and some other public areas of the school are relatively bare and would be greatly enhanced by select displays of the excellent work of the students.

MEDIA STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Recent results in GCE A-level compare well with other subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The guidance given to pupils about how to structure essay writing and develop analysis.

187. Whilst results in GCE A-level over the last two years have shown a slight rise in performance, no comparisons can be drawn with national attainment as comparative data is not available. In 2001, all students gained at least grade D and nearly 60 per cent obtained at least a grade B. These results indicate good achievement, since some students start the courses with average

or lower attainment in GCSE. No significant variations in standards are evident by gender or ethnicity.

188. The evidence from the inspection confirms that standards are above average, showing good achievement in the learning the students make over time. For example, Year 13 students demonstrate clear understanding of the main concepts of the subject, such as representation and genre. They can use specialist terms confidently and can exemplify them thoughtfully, drawing on knowledge of a wide range of media. They can write equally well about representation in the context of film texts and the marketing of film. Throughout Year 13, students make slightly better progress than in Year 12. Year 12 students are more secure in describing examples rather than analysing them, but grow in confidence when given challenging tasks such as closely examining advertisements.
189. Overall, students produce good practical work, usually in a wide range of media, including advertising images for films and desk-top publishing is being effectively developed. The production of advertising campaigns indicated a good understanding of professional techniques in advertising. Moving image productions are not as yet produced with the same care and imagination. Students are improving in their use of information and communication technology when producing their work. Whilst the commentaries which accompany these products show insight and discuss the rationale for production decisions well, for all higher attaining students, the work of others lacks the critical sharpness and perceptive evaluation needed for it to be good. The majority of students include considerable detail in their work, whilst not always using appropriate terminology. The lower attaining students rely heavily on describing their media products, with little analysis evident. More work is needed to improve that aspect of students' writing. Written coursework is good overall; the most able present it well. It is sometimes effectively illustrated with pictures, graphs and tables. Many students base their research reports on extensive, well-referenced reading, which they use with discrimination to support their own arguments. The students show generally good standards of literacy.
190. The teaching is consistently good, well informed by good, and improving, subject knowledge. It is intellectually challenging, always subjecting ideas and concepts to critical scrutiny. Hardly any jargon is used but where it is, rigorous scrutiny is applied to it. Marking of written work, in both draft and final form, is usually good with feedback normally detailed and helpful. Short term planning could benefit from better use of assessment information. Teachers ensure that technical language is thoroughly explored and fully understood by all students. Theory is never studied in isolation from a detailed scrutiny of media texts; it is usually carefully linked to texts to enable students to understand and appreciate them better. This supports higher levels of interest and motivation. A good range of media texts is effectively used by teachers to support their work. Suggestions for wider reading and a range of viewing and listening are also regularly made and often taken up. Relationships between teachers and students are good, with a suitable blend of good humour and academic rigour.
191. Learning on the course is good, with most students making good progress over time, more so in Year 13. Higher attaining students gain good command of the terminology and concepts required; they generally show enthusiasm and imagination in making media texts. Early production work is tackled in groups and students collaborate well, supporting each other. They present ideas cogently to their peers for evaluation and readily accept advice, both from them and from their teachers. Only occasionally do students not grasp significant points.
192. The subject is led effectively and managed very well. A good scheme of work sets the stage for consistently good teaching. It leads to a broad range of teaching approaches and ensures that students gain experience of an appropriate range of media. Resources are satisfactory, as there are limited computer facilities for completing practical work and few cameras are available. These resources are well used but limit standards in the production of moving image work of high quality.

HUMANITIES

The main focus of the inspection was geography. History was sampled and the overall provision is good. A level results in 2001 were below average overall in relation to the higher grades at A/B although the majority of students achieved a pass grade. In the AS results all 14 students passed with nearly a half gaining the higher grades. In the three lessons seen the teaching was satisfactory with some good features. Good teaching included clear explanation and a well-organised lesson structure leading to students gaining a good understanding of the role and nature of the Privy Council in Mary Tudor's reign.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Examination results well above average.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Strong leadership and management promote high standards.
- Retention rate on AS course is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students' contact with geographers from other institutions for exchange of ideas.

193. The most recent A level examination results were well above the national average. They were above the national average in the three previous years, and well above those at the time of the last inspection. In relation to their GCSE results, candidates did better than expected. In the first batch of results on the new AS level course, almost half the candidates gained one of the two highest grades, A or B. All candidates passed this examination and results were well above the national average in this course also. There has been no consistent pattern of male or female superiority in any of these results.
194. Inspection evidence shows overall classroom standards to be good. The standards of some students are very good. Completed assignments and improving essay technique indicate that standards will have risen sufficiently by the end of the course for students to gain examination results in line with those of 2001. Students in both Years 12 and 13 compile comprehensive notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources. Year 12 students studying human geography for example, understand fully the reasons for the expansion of the service sector in modern economies. By Year 13, students have gained sufficient knowledge to discuss maturely the decision of many international companies to transfer their production lines to less developed countries. Students produce well researched course work, often using advanced statistical methods to analyse fieldwork data. They use computers expertly for research on the Internet and to enhance the appearance of text and graphs in their work. The department's stress on the development of students' literacy and thinking skills has resulted in a rising standard of writing that should ensure that the majority will gain higher grade passes in their final examinations.
195. Teaching is consistently very good. Characteristics include a good tutorial style, inclusive questioning that encourages all students' participation, challenging content and brisk pace. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and obvious enthusiasm. They match tasks closely to the needs of individual students. These qualities, together with students' positive attitudes, ensure the quality of learning is very good. Students are encouraged to discuss complex issues, as in a Year 13 lesson on deprivation among certain groups in modern societies. Extended pieces of writing are marked regularly. Students are given clear and accurate judgements of the quality of their work, thereby helping them to improve it. Learning is promoted further by teachers' guidance in the use of a range of resources and frequent opportunities for students to organise their own learning. They grasp these opportunities to plan their own research work, often using resources from outside the school. Students gradually improve their skills, knowledge and understanding throughout Years 12 and 13. They take on more advanced statistical techniques and benefit from the very good teaching of thinking skills. Good

relationships with their teachers give them the confidence to seek help without embarrassment and to present research findings to their classmates.

196. Very good leadership and management of the subject have a marked influence on the quality of teaching and learning. Students' progress is monitored thoroughly, using a wealth of data. Classroom teaching and marking are monitored thoroughly. High standards have been achieved by students as a result of this work. Overall, the department has improved well since the last inspection. It is not resting on its laurels and is seeking to effect improvements through its carefully considered forward planning. The popularity of the subject is illustrated by the high proportion of Year 12 AS students continuing with the subject in Year 13. Students are rather isolated from geographers in other institutions. They would benefit from visiting other schools as well as local universities, thereby widening their experience and depth of knowledge.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus of the inspection was English and French. The work in German was sampled and the provision is good. Work reflects much of what is said below in relation to French. The quality of teaching is good. Students are learning well and achieving as expected in both Years 12 and 13, with particular strengths in listening and reading. Results in recent examinations are broadly in line with national averages.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers' specialist subject knowledge.
- Effective strategies for preparing students for examinations.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The development of teaching and learning styles.

197. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 in English literature were above national figures. All candidates gained a pass grade with a slightly higher than the national percentage attaining an A or B grade. In English language and literature results were in line with the national trend. These results represent satisfactory achievement when the students' attainment levels, when they started the course, are taken into account. There is a fluctuating trend over time.
198. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average. Students' skills of literary analysis develop over time, and their confidence in making literary judgements improves. Lower attaining students, however, continue to make straightforward, rather superficial observations about texts and they lack the ability to deconstruct deeper layers of meaning. Higher attaining students can quote appropriately from texts to back up their ideas and they can analyse text and synthesise ideas in quite a sophisticated way. One student's essay looking at the treatment of social class in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'North and South' and 'Hard Times' by Charles Dickens was written confidently and showed perceptive insights.
199. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Where it is good or better, students make good gains in knowledge and understanding in the lesson. In a Year 12 language and literature lesson seen, the group was looking at Tony Parson's use of irony in a magazine article on beggars and begging. It was well planned, with the teacher having high expectations of what students could achieve and the variety of activities helped to keep the students interested and motivated. The lesson was lively and engaging and, as a consequence the students learnt a lot. Where teaching is less effective, whilst still being satisfactory, the pace of lessons is rather leisurely and students are less actively engaged. For example, in a lesson in which students were looking at eighteenth and nineteenth century love poetry, the teacher had very good subject knowledge and explained and questioned students well. There was rather too much time allowed for group work, however, and after a while a number of students mentally relaxed and drifted off task.

200. Students have positive attitudes to the subject, which they take seriously; they want to do well. Procedures for marking and assessing work are good. AS and A-level work is helpfully marked against examination criteria. Teachers enter into a dialogue with students about their work and how they can improve. Comments are encouraging and teachers give good guidance in lessons in preparing students for examinations. In one lesson seen the teacher closely related work covered to the criteria and gave helpful advice as to how they could improve.
201. The leadership and management is sound. The development of teaching and learning styles is still to be addressed, but teachers have responded to the demands of the new AS and A level courses well. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

French

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Use of assessment.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in Year 12.

202. Over the last three years standards in advanced level have fluctuated according to the size of the group and the general prior attainment of students. In 2000 attainments were well above average, whereas in 1999 and 2001 attainments were about average. The AS results for Year 12 in 2001 were well below average and disappointing and demoralising for students and teachers, as many students achieved below expectations based on their GCSE result. A large group of 20 students stretched provision and resources. Essential opportunities for individual guidance in speaking were limited by the timetable provision, as the group could not be split frequently enough. Some nationally recognised issues relating to the examination only served to exacerbate the situation.
203. The standard seen from inspection evidence is below average in Year 12. Students are gradually beginning to incorporate into their work the more sophisticated words and phrases they read and hear in their topics, but they are slow to break away from the constraints of GCSE in their speaking and writing. Although they generally communicate well, their work contains several inaccuracies, with no particular patterns of errors. They are not yet confident enough to produce the lengthier pieces of work required and have still to develop an independent approach to taking notes and ensuring that they are well prepared. In the lessons seen, they showed gaps in their knowledge, such as failing to recognise the present participle, and confusion over similar-sounding words, when searching a French text for the equivalents of English phrases on the topic of jobs.
204. In Year 13 standards are above average overall. There are differing levels of attainment in the group of nine students who have elected to continue to A2 level, but all are feeling more confident after the trauma of the AS examinations. Students generally speak fluently, though some perform better in one-to-one situations than in class discussions. The discussions in the lessons, on genetic manipulation and on violence, were conducted at a high level. In listening and reading exercises, marks are consistently above average. In their written work some students are still making elementary errors of gender and spelling, but are achieving a good standard of communication. A third of them are achieving a high standard of accuracy and sophistication. They handle the more complicated grammatical concepts, such as subjunctive constructions, with competence.
205. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Clear objectives are set at the start of the lessons, having often been referred to in the previous lesson so that teachers expect students to be thoroughly prepared. Discussion in lessons is at a high level, but where students are not sufficiently prepared or forthcoming, is inevitably more teacher-led. The work teachers set is challenging, stretching students to their limits and there is great emphasis on the means of

attaining the highest marks and the development of the skills to achieve this. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher returned some written homework, stressing the importance of writing corrections and learning from mistakes. The subsequent listening exercise required sophisticated sifting skills for extracting precise information, but also wise use of time in reading the question, to be aware in advance of the sort of information to listen for. The final and most challenging task was to précis an English text in French. This required the technique of identifying key words and phrases and constructing short sentences from them, rather than simply “lifting” sections of text.

206. All teachers have a profound, detailed and up-to-date knowledge. Lessons are well planned and conducted according to their students' needs. They insist that exchanges are entirely in French, using English sparingly to explain a complicated piece of grammar, or to emphasise some examination technique. Discussion is at a high level, especially in the sophisticated arguments in Year 13. They continually challenge the students to explain their findings and justify their arguments. In the first of a series of lessons on violence, for instance, Year 13 students each had a printed “opinion”, which they had to explain and say whether they agreed or not and why. They then had to ask another student whether they agreed or not and to give a different reason why. The teacher was then able to bring all shades of opinion together and lead discussion on issues, such as racism and prejudice, which may be the causes of violence.
207. At all times students are aware of their attainment and progress and especially of how they can improve their performance. In their record of achievement students grade their own performance and teachers add their grade. Both comment and set agreed targets. Feedback on work is also full and constructive. A series of “help sheets” encourages good practice in personal organisation and gives advice on how to support learning. The revision and extension of grammar is systematic and full.
208. The department is well organised and led and teachers consistently share the best practice. Students have access to information and communication technology on a regular but limited basis, owing to demands on central facilities. However, they make good independent use of the French press websites on the Internet for up-to-date information on the various topics. They also undergo work experience in France and Germany as part of the course.
209. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Numbers have fluctuated, but candidates have presented themselves each year and there are more male students than previously.