

ADDENDUM

NAME OF SCHOOL: CHASETOWN HIGH SCHOOL

URN: 124469

Inspection ID: 189713

Registered Inspector: Mr R Hedge

Date of inspection: 25th February to 1st March 2002

Please note that the paragraphs '**Information about the school**' and '**How good the school is**' in Part A of the summary of the report should read as below:

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chasetown High is an average size comprehensive school of 836 boys and girls with a sixth form of 87 students. Taking the last five years together, the standards reached by students at the time they entered the school in Year 7 have been below average, though the present Years 7 and 8 were broadly average on entry. A below-average number of students is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is below the national average and the proportion for whom statements of special needs are maintained is above average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The number of students from minority ethnic background is very small. The school has had considerable difficulty in appointing permanent teachers, though the situation is considerably improved for the next academic year. At the time of the inspection one lesson in five was being taught by temporary or supply staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good an improving school whose strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Although standards are only average, pupils make good progress from a position which in the past has been below average at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs do well. Girls do better than boys. Sixth form students do very well. Teaching by permanent staff and management are good, as is value for money.

Signed for and on behalf of the Registered Inspector: Chris Glynn

Dated: 31 May 2002

INSPECTION REPORT

CHASETOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Chasetown, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124469

Headteacher: Robert Newton

Reporting inspector: Roy Hedge
2932

Dates of inspection: 25 February to 1 March 2002

Inspection number: 189713

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pool Road
Chasetown
Staffordshire

Postcode: WS7 8QW

Telephone number: 01543 685828

Fax number: 01543 677485

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Burns

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2932	Mr R Hedge	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>School's results and pupils' /students achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils/students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
13786	Mrs S Walsh	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
30702	Mr P Bowyer	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Mathematics (sixth form)</p>	
11044	Mrs J Hedge	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English (sixth form)</p> <p>Sixth form Coordinator</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>	
12356	Mr R Dickason	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Biology (sixth form)</p>	

11969	Mr J Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Geography Business (sixth form)	
31129	Mr J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design	
29972	Mr J Webster	Team inspector	Geography	
4355	Mr F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education History (sixth form)	
20287	Mr D Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form) English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils/students?
27665	Ms A Lees	Team inspector	Music	
1210	Mr W Walton	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chasetown High is an average size comprehensive school of 836 boys and girls with a sixth form of 87 students. The standards reached by students at the time they enter the school in Year 7 are below average. A below-average number of students is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is below the national average and the proportion for whom statements of special needs are maintained is above average. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The number of students from minority ethnic background is very small. The school has had considerable difficulty in appointing permanent teachers, though the situation is considerably improved for the next academic year. At the time of the inspection one lesson in five was being taught by temporary or supply staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school whose strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Although standards are only average, pupils make good progress from a position which is below average at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs do well. Girls do better than boys. Sixth form students do very well. Teaching by permanent staff and management are good, as is value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching by permanent staff is good.
- Attendance is above average; pupils' attitudes and relationships are good and behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Management is good: there is a civilised ethos in which learning can flourish and a determination to drive up standards.
- There is a very good range of activities for pupils outside lessons.
- There is very good provision for pupils' social and cultural development.
- Provision for music is very good.

What could be improved

- There is an urgent need to ensure that there are enough qualified, permanent teachers to meet the needs of pupils and the curriculum.
- A measure of unsatisfactory teaching leads to underachievement in English.
- Unsatisfactory management of the science department leads to underachievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996. Since then there has been good progress and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Standards have been inconsistent but have represented good achievement by pupils given the standard at which they enter the school in Year 7. There is less unsatisfactory teaching. Issues identified in the last report have mostly been dealt with, but not in the science department. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is much improved; marking and assessment and the analysis and use of assessment information are much improved; better monitoring of provision, including teaching has been introduced and provision for pupils' cultural development is now a strength, though provision for spiritual development is still unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	D	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	Not available	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science in 2001 and taken together over the three years from 1999 to 2001 were average. Standards were in line with those of similar schools but on this basis English results were below average. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or better was above average in science but well below average in English and below average in mathematics. Girls do better than boys overall, by a greater margin than nationally. Results are improving at the same rate as is the case nationally. These standards represent good achievement in view of the below average standards pupils had reached at the time they began Year 7. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards at present in Year 9 are above average in science, geography and music and average in all other subjects except art and design where they are below average. Students' points score in the 2001 GCSE examinations was average but below the average of similar schools. In comparison with other schools which had similar results at the end of Year 9 two years earlier, though, results were above average and represent sound achievement given standards on entry to Year 7 five years earlier. The proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE pass at grades A* to G was well above the average of similar schools, though the proportion gaining at least five A* to C grades was well below similar schools. Results are improving, but slower than they are nationally. In the years since 1998 girls have done better than boys by a greater margin than is the case nationally. Pupils' average points score in 2001 met the school's ambitious target, but the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades fell well short. There are some areas where achievement is not good enough. Lower attaining boys do not do well enough in science in Years 10 and 11. In mathematics, there are too few opportunities for higher attaining pupils to make the rapid progress of which they are capable. Boys make much less good progress than girls in design and technology, history and art. Standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are average. Standards of numeracy are sound and students achieve well in mathematics. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has clearly had a beneficial effect on the attainment of Year 7. Pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress. The average points score of students entered for two or more GCE A-level examinations was well above average in 1999 and 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students like school, are generally courteous, pay attention, work hard and concentrate. They ask and answer questions and are able to work collaboratively or individually as required. They take full advantage of the activities the school offers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is very good. Only occasionally, when teaching is unsatisfactory, do standards decline.

Personal development and relationships	Good. There is little evidence of bullying or other oppressive behaviour and pupils work together and support each other well.
Attendance	Above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching by permanent staff is good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. In six out of ten of the lessons observed by inspectors in Years 7 to 11, teaching was good or better. In over a quarter of lessons teaching was very good or excellent. As a consequence of this good teaching, students' learning was at least good in six lessons out of every ten observed with students from Years 7 to 11 and with the sixth form. In more than one lesson in ten, though, teaching was unsatisfactory and more than half of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by temporary or supply staff. The school urgently needs to ensure that there are enough permanent, qualified staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and pupils' needs. At the time of the inspection about a fifth of teaching was by temporary or supply staff. Less than one lesson in 20 taught by permanent staff was unsatisfactory. Otherwise, the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is remarkably consistent. There are no subjects where teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory overall in design and technology, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and English, in religious education and art and design in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in mathematics, geography and physical education overall and in religious education, and art and design in Years 10 and 11. Music teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Overall the quality of English teaching is satisfactory; there is some excellent teaching and some that is not satisfactory. The learning of literacy skills is satisfactory overall though some pupils whose literacy skills are below average could benefit from more support. The best lessons are carefully planned and presented with enthusiasm but where teaching is unsatisfactory pupils have too little opportunity to be involved because the teacher dominates the lessons and the pace is too slow. Mathematics teaching is good though in some lessons taught by supply or temporary staff, lessons lack focus, pupils become disengaged and teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Overall, though, numeracy is well taught in the mathematics department though there is little reinforcement in other areas. In Years 7 to 9 science teaching is good. In Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory but few lessons contain examples of investigative work and pupils do not make sufficient progress in this aspect of science. There is a significant number of science lessons that are unsatisfactory and this is not confined to teachers on short-term contracts or supply teachers. Some science lessons are dominated by the teacher, and lower attaining pupils, particularly boys, make insufficient progress as a consequence of unsatisfactory or undemanding teaching. The school makes every effort to meet the needs of all of its pupils, whatever their particular strengths and weaknesses. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs in class and withdrawal groups is good. Overall the quality of sixth form teaching is good. It is very good in English literature.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum provides good breadth of experience and meets the needs of different groups of pupils, offering equality of access and opportunity. Arrangements for grouping pupils according to levels of attainment do not work well in all subjects and the working of the timetable means there are long gaps between lessons for some subjects. The requirement for religious education in the sixth form is not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Arrangements for teaching in mainstream classes and withdrawal groups serve their needs well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, though provision for spiritual development is not satisfactory; there is no whole-school planning. Provision for moral development is good. Teachers set a good example. Provision for social and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. There are good levels of care and staff work hard to meet the needs of pupils with problems. The progress of GCSE pupils is monitored carefully and they have targets set but these arrangements have not been introduced into Years 7 to 9. Behaviour and attendance are monitored well. The school has satisfactory relationships with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. There is very clear direction and identification of priorities for improving provision and raising standards. Planning is good. Most departmental management is good though unsatisfactory management of the science department leads to underachievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors play their full part in setting a strategic direction for the school and monitoring effectiveness. They are supportive and know the school well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is good analysis of test and examination results to determine overall effectiveness and the success of departments. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and there are departmental reviews.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is good. Care is taken to ensure that the school obtains the best value possible in buying goods and services.

Levels of resourcing are satisfactory and accommodation meets the school's needs. Permanent staff are well qualified for their roles, but there are not enough of them. At the time of the inspection about one lesson in five was being taught by temporary or supply staff, with serious implications for the quality of teaching and standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching is good.• Pupils are expected to work hard.• The school is approachable.• Pupils make good progress.• The school is well managed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school does not work closely enough with parents.• There is some poor behaviour in class.• Pupils do not get enough homework.• There is not enough information about pupils' progress.

Inspectors largely agree with parents' positive comments though take the view that teaching is satisfactory because of the extensive use of temporary staff. The inspection found parents concerns about behaviour in class to be unfounded; standards of behaviour in lessons are very good. Appropriate homework is regularly set and marked. There are regular reports but they do not contain enough detail, especially about what pupils know, understand and can do, or how to do to improve their work. The school tries hard to work closely with parents and does reasonably well in this respect.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

CHASETOWN HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

At the time of the inspection the school had 87 students in the sixth form. Sixth form provision is based largely on AS and A-level courses, though a successful Advanced Vocational Certificate (AVCE) in business and a link course with a local college are offered. Almost all of the students joining Year 12 in 2000 stayed on for a second year. There are few students of ethnic minority heritage in the sixth form, none for whom English is a second language and none with special educational needs. The background of sixth form students is similar to that of the rest of the school. A large proportion of students have part-time jobs.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and cost effective. A-level results of students entered for at least two A-levels in 1999 and 2000 were well above the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection were mostly above average, and well above average in English literature. Most students learn effectively and achieve results that are at least satisfactory given their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in English Literature and English Language and good in mathematics and biology. It is satisfactory in business and geography. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and students are well supported by subject teachers. Leadership and management are effective and the sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average and have improved considerably since the last inspection and students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Standards in English Literature are well above average.
- Management is good.

What could be improved

- There are no assemblies or religious education.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Teaching is good and learning is effective. Only AS and A-level courses are offered though there are options within these courses.
Biology	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well given their attainment levels at the beginning of the course. Lesson planning is very good and much teaching is interesting and demanding.

AVCE Business	Good. Students achieve well as a result of sound, often good teaching. Students are well supported and guided by experienced teachers. Standards of the work seen were average.
Geography	Satisfactory. Results last year were average and girls achieved significantly better than boys. Teaching has several strengths. Of the five pupils who embarked on the AS course in 2000, four completed it, three opted to continue into A2 and two remain.
English Literature	Very Good. Teaching is very good and students achieve very well given standards at the beginning of the course. The subject is presented with enthusiasm.

Work was sampled in physics, biology, chemistry, music, history, religious education, French, physical education, art and English language. Teaching is very good in music, good in chemistry, physical education, art, history and English language and satisfactory in physics, religious education and French. Provision for music is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Their work is assessed carefully, targets are set and progress regularly reviewed. There is effective advice about careers and applications to higher education. Subject teachers are approachable and support students well.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Planning and responsibility for day-to-day management are very effectively carried out by the head of sixth form. Management of students' support, guidance and personal development is good. Development planning for the sixth form is good and the views of students and teachers are sought. The quality of teaching is monitored. Attainment and the recruitment to and retention of students on courses are monitored and good use is made of assessment data to provide predictions of A-level results, set targets and to calculate value added. Governors take an active interest in the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are accessible and approachable. There is a good range of activities in addition to lessons. Teaching is good. Teachers give extra help and encouragement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' views are not sufficiently taken into account. There is not enough information about how well students are doing. Students are not treated as young adults.

Inspectors agree with students' positive comments. Students are generally positive about the sixth form. They speak very well of the teaching they receive and their relationship with teachers. There is some evidence to support the view that students are not treated as young adults. Many students who took AS-level examinations last year, when they were introduced, feel that they were not clear how well they were doing except in English.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Results of national tests taken in Year 6, and the range of tests taken in Year 7 indicate that pupils have joined the school in Year 7 at an overall standard which is below average. The present Years 7 to 9, however, were broadly average on entry. Pupils make good progress in their first three years in the school. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, standards in English, mathematics and science in 2001 and taken together over the three years from 1999 to 2001 were average. Standards were in line with the average of other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in 2001, though on this basis English results were below average. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or better was above average in science but well below average in English and below average in mathematics, reflecting the relatively low proportion of high attaining students on entry to the school in Year 7 three years earlier. The school does not monitor the relative achievements of the very small number of pupils of minority ethnic heritage but observations made during the inspection indicated no significant differences. Girls do better than boys overall, by a larger margin than nationally. Results are improving at the same rate as is the case nationally. These standards represent good achievement in view of the standards pupils had reached at the time they began Year 7.
2. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards at present in Year 9 are above average in science, geography and music and average in all other subjects except art and design, where they are below average, largely because of a lack of focus on the teaching of basic skills in the past, at a time when much teaching was by temporary staff.
3. Students' points score in the 2001 GCSE examinations was average and below the average of similar schools. In 2001 students did better at GCSE than those from other schools at a similar standard in Year 9 two years earlier. The proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE pass at grades A* to G was well above the average of similar schools, though the proportion gaining at least five A*-C grades was well below similar schools, reflecting the relative lack of higher attaining pupils on entry to the school five years earlier. Results are improving, but slower than they are nationally. In the years since 1998 girls have done better than boys by a greater margin than is the case nationally. Pupils' average points score in 2001 met the school's ambitious target, but the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades fell well short. Standards observed during the inspection in Year 11 were above average in music and practical work in physical education as a result of effective teaching, below average in modern foreign languages (because higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged) and design and technology, and average in all other subjects.
4. These standards represent good achievement in the first three years of the school and sound achievement thereafter. There are, however, some areas where achievement is not good enough. Lower attaining boys do not do well enough in science in Years 10 and 11 as a consequence of unsatisfactory or undemanding teaching arising from unsatisfactory management of the department. In mathematics, there are too few opportunities for higher attaining pupils to make the

rapid progress of which they are capable. Boys make much less good progress than girls in design and technology, history and art and design. The school has explored ways of improving the performance of boys but there is little evidence of active strategies in most lessons.

5. Observations made during the inspection indicate that standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are average and that students have the necessary skills to enable them to work successfully. Most pupils read quite fluently and with understanding, although some reading aloud by pupils in upper and middle sets in Years 8 and 10 lacks expression or evident awareness of punctuation. Overall standards of writing are average. High attainers in Year 8 write fluently and their work is well presented. Some higher attaining pupils write at length and use vivid and expressive language. Pupils in Year 11 have produced some very fluent writing for GCSE coursework. Higher attaining pupils' writing demonstrates good command of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Overall, speaking and listening skills are average. Most pupils are quite confident, willing to participate in discussion and answer questions. Fewer pupils use very sophisticated vocabulary to develop and sustain their ideas in discussion than might be expected. Progress in the development of speaking and listening is hindered by limited opportunities in some lessons. Standards of numeracy are sound and students achieve well in mathematics. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has clearly had a beneficial effect on the attainment of Year 7. In science, good organisation of the curriculum and effective teaching leads to above average standards by the end of Year 9. Standards in science are only average by the end of Year 11 because pupils do not have enough experience of investigative work.
6. Pupils with special needs make good progress. In the GCSE examination in 2001, 25 pupils who were or had been on the special needs register each averaged nine passes. Of 26 pupils at present in Year 9 who had been referred for special support in reading on entry to the school, only six needed to continue with that support beyond Easter of Year 8. During the inspection pupils with special needs were making good progress. The standard they were reaching in practical work in music and physical education was in line with national averages. The achievements of these pupils are good in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9, but in Years 10 and 11 they are underachieving in science. In all other areas of the curriculum their achievements are at least satisfactory and often good. There is little difference between the standards of boys and girls with special needs, although boys do outnumber girls on the special needs register.

Sixth form

7. The average points score of students entered for two or more GCE A-level examinations was well above average in 1999 and 2000. The results of male students were above average and female students well above average. Results in 2001 were only slightly below those in 2000. In 2001, A-level results in art and design, chemistry and English literature were well above average. In economics, English language and mathematics they were above average and in biology and history they were average. Design and technology results were below average and history, religious studies and sports studies results were well below average. History results in earlier years have been average. Taking into account standards on entry to the sixth form, students' achievements are good. A satisfactory number of students went on to study in higher education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils have good attitudes to school. They arrive promptly in the morning, most are well equipped and ready to start work. They are very involved in the life of the school. Many pupils are involved in musical activities. The jazz band, for example, is very well supported and pupils are proud of their involvement. At the time of the inspection a significant number of pupils were involved in the school's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and pupils enjoy extra-curricular games and sport.
9. Pupils have good attitudes to their lessons. Behaviour in lessons is very good and this provides a very good atmosphere for learning. Attitudes of pupils in Year 7 are very good and often excellent. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were encouraged to listen and answer carefully and as a consequence they were confident and willing to contribute ideas about a sensitive subject. This was a measure of the very good relationships that they had with their teacher. Although pupils are well behaved they can lack the curiosity and drive to understand, which limits learning. They are often quiet and passive and rather slow to answer questions, an attitude that continues to the sixth form.
10. On the rare occasions when attitudes and behaviour were found to be unsatisfactory this was always associated with unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils can be very tolerant of pedestrian teaching and can treat teachers they do not know well with respect. However, this is not always the case and there can be a perfunctory willingness to engage in work so the final result can be that little work is produced. This is associated with teaching where expectations are too low and pupils do not learn well.
11. Attitudes of pupils with special needs are good. They are confident and fully integrated into the work of the school. The behaviour of younger pupils with special needs in modern languages is excellent and they enjoy the subject. In mathematics and English they concentrate, stay on task and readily join in discussion. They are well motivated and work hard in ICT. They work very well in co-operation with others in music and physical education. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy good relationships with other pupils.
12. Behaviour around the school is good and there is a calm, orderly atmosphere. Pupils behave surprisingly well on the narrow corridors where they are crowded together. Behaviour in the dining room and on the playground is good. There is some bullying, usually restricted to name calling but the majority of pupils feel safe and secure in the school and there is no evidence of sexist, racist or other oppressive behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to understand the impact of their actions on others. There is a healthy respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and pupils listen well to one another's viewpoints in lessons. In a Year 7 registration group, for example, where racism was discussed, most pupils immediately recognised the hurtful nature of racially abusive language. There is an average number of temporary exclusions for a school of this size, but there was only one permanent exclusion last year.
13. Relationships are very good. Pupils have a great deal of respect for their teachers and stand up when they come in the room. The mutual respect between teachers and pupils promotes the very good behaviour in the school, and very good relationships between pupils means that they can speak out in lessons without fear of derision. Relationships between pupils are very good, and boys and girls often work together. In a very well organised Year 11 English lesson, for example, boys

and girls co-operated well together, working in pairs to explore language, target audience and bias in factual writing. During the whole class introduction, boys responded extremely well to the teacher's well-directed questions and were keen to give sensible answers.

14. Pupils exhibit good initiative and are keen to take on responsibility. In physical education lessons, for example, pupils set out equipment with the minimum of supervision. Older pupils will take the lead in warm-up sessions and pupils also put equipment away without being told. Pupils take care of the equipment they use and work sensibly and carefully in design and technology.
15. Attendance is good. Attendance rates for the 2000-2001 academic year were above the national average and rates of unauthorised absence were low. Good rates of attendance have been sustained since the previous inspection.

Sixth Form

16. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes towards their schoolwork and there is a good working atmosphere. Students are usually very attentive and work with concentration. They are willing to work hard and listen very well. In art and design lessons there is very good development of ideas. However in some subjects students lack confidence and their responses to the teacher's questions are very brief. Communication and thinking skills are slow to develop, for example in religious education and in mathematics, when again there is a noticeable lack of confidence in answering teachers' questions. Students are often not confident when using specialist language. In some subjects the very small groups make it difficult to establish good interaction and rapport which limits the opportunity for lively discussion.
17. Relationships are very good. Most teachers provide pupils with very good support and try to boost their confidence. Students report that a minority of teachers do not treat them like young adults. The development of personal and learning skills is good. Students have plenty of opportunity to develop independent study, undertaking research tasks in English, for example, but they are not particularly skilled. Independence is better developed in some subjects such as physical education than in others.
18. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students in this year's Year 12 have good attendance and rarely miss their lessons. Students in Year 13 have satisfactory attendance which has improved substantially compared to their attendance last year when they were in Year 12.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching by permanent members of staff is good. In six out of ten of the lessons observed by inspectors in Years 7 to 11, the teaching was good or better. In over a quarter of lessons teaching was very good or excellent. As a consequence of this good teaching, pupils' learning was at least good in six lessons out of every ten observed in Years 7 to 11 and with the sixth form. In more than one lesson in ten teaching was unsatisfactory, mostly because of the negative impact of temporary and supply teachers. Overall, teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

20. More than half of the unsatisfactory lessons seen were taught by temporary or supply staff. The school urgently needs to ensure that there are enough permanent qualified staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and pupils' needs. There has been good progress towards meeting this need in time for the new school year, but in the meantime standards have suffered. At the time of the inspection about a fifth of teaching was by temporary or supply staff. The design and technology, geography, history, ICT, mathematics, physical education, art and drama areas have all been affected to some degree in the last two years. Fewer than one lesson in 20 taught by permanent staff was unsatisfactory.
21. Otherwise, the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is remarkably consistent. There are no subjects where teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory overall in design and technology, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and English, in religious education and art in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in mathematics, geography and physical education overall and in religious education and art and design in Years 10 and 11. Music teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The Key Stage 3 national strategy is beginning to have an impact on learning in English and mathematics, but the school still has some way to go in introducing progress units for lower attaining pupils in English.
22. Overall the quality of English teaching is satisfactory. There is some excellent teaching and some that is not satisfactory. As a result the learning of literacy skills is satisfactory. The best lessons are carefully planned and presented with enthusiasm. Relationships are very positive and pupils are keen to participate. Pupils are kept busy in the best lessons, expectations are very high and tasks are challenging. Pupils respond well and their interest is sustained because the lesson moves along with pace. Where teaching is unsatisfactory pupils have too little opportunity to be involved because the teacher dominates the lessons, the pace is very slow and the range of tasks set very narrow. Sometimes very low-level tasks are set which do not sufficiently challenge pupils. In these lessons pupils do their best but make too little progress.
23. Mathematics teaching is good and numeracy skills are taught well in the department. Lessons taught by permanent members of staff are well focused. Pupils are well managed and classroom organisation is good. Effective question and answer sessions involve all pupils in discussion. This approach produces good attitudes, a positive working environment and good progress. However, in some lessons taught by supply or temporary staff, lessons lack focus, pupils become disengaged and teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
24. In Years 7 to 9 science teaching is good. In Years 10 and 11 and overall it is satisfactory. Learning by pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. The best lessons have clear objectives and are well planned; the teaching is interesting and dynamic and often contains a variety of well-chosen activities that interest pupils. Few lessons contain examples of investigative work, however, and pupils do not make sufficient progress in this aspect of science. In Years 10 and 11 there is a significant number of lessons that are unsatisfactory and this is not confined to teachers on short-term contracts or supply teachers. The more successful lessons are well planned and interesting. Well-prepared information sheets are used effectively as they were in a lesson about why chemical reactions may be fast or slow. Sometimes, though, lessons are not prepared well enough and too much time is spent copying or answering

questions from a textbook. Some lessons are dominated by the teacher and pupils have no opportunities to work independently. Lower attaining pupils, particularly boys, make insufficient progress as a consequence of unsatisfactory or undemanding teaching in some lessons in Years 10 and 11.

25. Teachers across the curriculum seek to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all students. The very small numbers of students of minority ethnic heritage and the highest attaining students learn effectively. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs in class and withdrawal groups is good. Good learning also takes place in a well organised paired reading scheme. Younger pupils meet sixth form partners on several mornings each week for short, intensive reading practice. This arrangement is raising reading standards. Teachers are aware of individual education plans (IEP) which are specific to the subject department. In almost all cases the programmes provided for pupils respond to IEP targets. It is only in science in Years 10 and 11 that some teaching is not directed to the specific needs of pupils, who then make unsatisfactory progress. Teachers know pupils well. Close attention to their needs and very good relationships enable good learning to take place. Pupils with special needs are fully included in lessons. They are respected by their peers and teachers. In some lessons such as music and physical education, it is impossible to distinguish on the basis of involvement or attainment between those with special needs and others.
26. Purposeful homework is generally set and reinforces and extends learning, though mathematics homework is not always effective and in art, homework is not always sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. Pupils are very well managed in class, so lessons are purposeful and behaviour and discipline are good.
27. The arrangement by which all pupils with special needs are taught by the same teacher in mathematics and English is very successful. These teachers know the pupils very well and closely match educational programmes to their needs as they progress through the school. Teachers involved in withdrawal programmes also know their clients very well. Intensive learning takes place in withdrawal classes when demanding teachers providing interesting and varied programmes keep pupils busily engaged in their work. Some of the support provided by teaching assistants contributes to good learning, for example in geography, where there was support with reading and interpreting the topic and in science with younger pupils to ensure accurate measurement.

Sixth form

28. Overall the quality of sixth form teaching is good. Inspectors saw no unsatisfactory teaching. English literature teaching is very good and as a result students achieve very well. Teachers have very strong knowledge of the subject and present it sensitively and with enthusiasm. Lessons have varied tasks and good pace and teachers' careful questioning draws themes together to focus students on the language and content of the text. Expectations are high. Music teaching is also very good.
29. Sixth form teaching is good in mathematics and science and satisfactory in business and geography. In mathematics all sixth form teaching seen during the inspection was good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. In biology, teaching is good with many very good features. Relationships between students and teachers are particularly good and very good use is made of ICT. Expectations are generally high. Good use is made of a variety of well planned teaching methods: reading research tasks are used, references to the Internet are given so that students have access to very up to date information and good use is

made of examination questions to prepare students effectively for the module tests. In business, teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work with enthusiasm which motivates students and promotes learning. Students feel that they are well supported by the current staff but recognise that as with other areas in the department they have been affected by staffing difficulties. On occasions the enthusiasm of teachers results in too little responsibility being placed with the students for their own learning. Geography teaching is satisfactory. Planning is good and lesson objectives are shared with the class.

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

30. Since the previous inspection the school has made changes to the curriculum that have put right the main reservations expressed in the report. This is particularly true of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils now enjoy a good range of experiences and an alternative curriculum which caters for their needs in Years 10 and 11.
31. Overall, the curriculum provides good breadth of experience and responds well to the needs of different groups of pupils, offering equality of access and opportunity. The National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education are in place throughout the main school and all statutory requirements are met. In addition to the obligatory subjects, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 benefit from weekly sessions of drama and a programme of personal, social and health education. A second language, German, is added to French in Year 8 for all pupils except those with special educational needs. This is appropriate as it allows these pupils to concentrate on their main foreign language.
32. The arrangements for grouping pupils in Years 7 to 9 on the basis of their prior attainment are broadly successful in providing for the needs of individuals. Groups containing pupils with special educational needs, for example, are much smaller than the rest and allow teachers to concentrate better on individual pupils. However, these groups are the same for a number of disparate subjects and thus make difficult any movement of pupils from one set to another in the course of the academic year. In a very small number of cases this lack of flexibility has caused a pupil to be in the wrong group for a particular subject.
33. The two-week timetable allows the school to allocate an appropriate amount of time to each subject and run 60 minute lessons which are of appropriate length for most subjects. However, in some areas - design and technology, ICT, physical education, religious education and modern foreign languages - lessons are unevenly distributed leaving long gaps between them in a number of cases. In Year 7, for example, some pupils have two lessons of design and technology in one week and none in the following week. In Year 10, four groups studying foreign languages have four lessons of French or German in one week and only one the next. This affects the continuity of pupils' learning and puts pressure on teachers to go back unduly over previous work.
34. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides well for all pupils and is broad and relevant. In addition to their main subjects, all pupils follow a short course of religious education leading to GCSE or a certificate of achievement, and a weekly session of personal, social and health education. A number of pupils for whom conventional GCSE courses are less appropriate follow a good alternative curriculum which mixes vocational and life skills with mainstream subjects, and involves a weekly session at a local college of further education. Following these courses helps to foster independence and good study habits in pupils who often need them most. A GNVQ

course in ICT and a GCSE in business studies are also on offer and attract large numbers of pupils. All pupils have at least one period each week of ICT.

35. Pupils in every year follow a good programme of personal and social education, taught by their form tutors. The programme appropriately covers health topics such as addiction, hygiene and sex education. Lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory and enhanced by the contributions of visiting speakers. Careers education is built into the social education programme. The curriculum is currently being sensibly brought up to date and contains all of the necessary elements to provide both information and guidance to pupils as their needs develop. There is assistance in making decisions about their future at the critical stages when they have to make choices about their educational and career development. There is a programme of work experience for Year 10 pupils. Good individual counselling is available from the careers service.
36. The school has a policy on literacy but the emphasis given to literacy by subject areas is patchy. Some areas do not have a planned approach. There is, however, good practice in geography, where pupils have opportunities for creative writing and role-play and low attaining pupils' writing is supported by the use of carefully selected materials. In physical education at GCSE level pupils have significant opportunities for reading and writing. Good attention is given to technical language and there is an emphasis on discussion. Good use is made of specialist terms in religious education but pupils rarely engage in speaking and listening. Pupils are helped to use dictionaries in modern languages. Not enough is made of pupils' reading for themselves in science and only a few teachers ask pupils to write for different purposes. Little use is made of displays of keywords in mathematics. In history pupils are asked to write in a range of differing styles, sometimes at length and in design and technology Year 11 pupils were involved in an evaluation exercise requiring good understanding of terminology. There are clear and effective strategies in English to help lower attaining and special needs pupils, who make good progress. Some effective teaching of literacy was seen in English in Year 7 and there is much good practice but overall, approaches to literacy in the subject are not sufficiently focused or consistent. There is too little opportunity for speaking and listening in some English lessons and in design and technology.
37. The school has developed a cross-curricular numeracy policy to try to improve the teaching and learning of numeracy across all departments. In geography the department is well aware of the cross-curricular numeracy policy although some aspects have yet to be implemented. Currently there is much good practice; pupils are confident in using a variety of graphs to display data (for example, they use bar charts, line graphs, histograms and pie charts) and they understand the basis for grid references on maps. In these areas most work is done accurately. In science there is also good practice although the effect of the numeracy policy is less clear than in geography. Most numerical work (which is largely graphical in nature) is handled well. Pupils can construct graphs of radioactivity, graphs of rates of reaction and distance-time graphs. They are also competent at using percentages. Pupils also collect and display data in a variety of forms. As in geography, most work is accurately done.

38. There are good arrangements for pupils with special educational needs through a combination of in-class provision, some with additional support, and withdrawal. Withdrawal arrangements and in-class support are in line with the requirements of statements of special need. The support arrangements, the knowledge teachers have of pupils, the grouping together for teaching purposes of pupils of similar attainment, the provision of tasks which meet pupils' needs and open-ended work allow pupils to have full access to the curriculum.
39. A very good range of extra-curricular activities extends personal interests and provides additional challenge to the many pupils who take part in them. Several groups, such as the orchestra, jazz band and choirs, are available for the large number of pupils who learn a musical instrument, and they have numerous opportunities to play and sing in school events and concerts. The English and drama departments arrange many events: public speaking, poetry workshops, trips to the theatre and the annual drama production. Pupils have very good opportunities to keep themselves fit and enjoy sport through team games, clubs and dance. Other subject departments, for example art, geography, science and religious education, arrange field trips and visits to places of interest: museums, galleries, the Houses of Parliament and places of worship. Pupils interested in mathematics and computing also have frequent opportunities to extend their experience outside the curriculum. Pupils who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme carry out service in the community and expeditions as part of their award.
40. The school makes very good use of the local community for the benefit of pupils. This is true, for example, of pupils in Year 10 and above who have many contacts with businesses in the community in the course of vocational programmes and through work experience. Pupils studying music visit and entertain people in the community with bands and ensembles, and take part in the Lichfield arts festival. Members of the City of Birmingham Symphony orchestra have worked with school musicians to compose a piece of music for public performance. The school, with its gold Sportsmark award, is busy in the community with its successful hockey, cricket and football teams involving boys and girls at all stages. Pupils from the school regularly take part in public speaking and poetry reading in the community.
41. The school's relationships with its partner institutions are constructive. A well established and productive link exists between the school and a local college of further education for pupils on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. The head of Year 7 takes time to visit feeder primary schools to gather information about new pupils and talk to children and staff. This helps the process of transition for Year 6 pupils, who have a number of opportunities to visit the school in the course of their final year in primary school. There is scope for more curricular links between subject departments and the main feeder primary schools to ensure continuity for the benefit of pupils.
42. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection when this area was one of the key issues for improvement. An audit of provision has taken place since the last inspection and clear guidance was given to staff about how to identify and plan for opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness. However, there has been little further development since the audit and, apart from in music, geography and religious education, little evidence in planning or teaching that opportunities which naturally arise to enrich this aspect of pupils' experience are being taken. Though currently the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship, each year-group holds one such act a week. These meet the requirement to be

“mainly or broadly Christian” and good use is made by the school of local clergy who often lead collective worship. Pupils are attentive and well-behaved on these occasions, but there are few opportunities for quiet reflection and the potential for creating a suitable atmosphere in the theatre where assemblies are held is not exploited. The statutory requirement for collective worship in the sixth form is not met.

43. The provision for pupils’ moral development is good. Relationships and behaviour reflect the moral intentions expressed in the Code of Conduct. Pupils are clearly taught right from wrong and respond positively to the ethos of the school, which stresses respect for the views and values of others. Teachers are good role models for pupils. There are good opportunities in many subject areas to develop pupils’ moral awareness. In music, modern foreign languages and religious education pupils explore a range of moral questions as these arise in lessons. In geography and history themes such as war and conflict resolution and the moral consequences of aid and trade provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on questions of personal and social morality. In physical education they are encouraged to play fairly and to respect others. The personal and social education programme provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues and they are encouraged to reflect on their own responsibilities in programmes of sex and drugs education. Pupils are also beginning to learn that they can make a difference to the moral context of their lives. They readily respond to appeals from charities and have supported activities in aid of Children in Need, British Legion Poppy Appeal, and a local hospice. Over two hundred pupils took part in a sixth form sponsored competition in memory of a much respected teacher which raised over a thousand pounds for Save the Children.
44. The provision for pupils’ social development is very good. They are encouraged to behave in a socially mature and responsible manner and there are many areas of school life where this is evident. Team work in physical education, field and group work in geography and very good opportunities for collaboration in music provide opportunities for the development of social skills. Pupils share facilities in ICT without fuss and subscribe to the acceptable user policy. Pupils’ social development is also supported by teachers’ good management of lessons. Good examples of this were seen in history, science, physical education, religious education and English. There are good opportunities in personal and social education for discussing social issues and the development of pupils’ social awareness. The school also offers pupils a wide range of opportunities to show initiative and responsibility. Pupils work with a local voluntary organisation by helping in a “Live at Home Scheme” for elderly local people. There is an active school council, pupils carry out reception duties responsibly and help in the library and on parents and new entrants evenings. A notable feature of provision is the way in which the school involves pupils in the reviews of departmental performance and interviews for teaching staff.
45. The provision for pupils’ cultural development is very good and has significantly improved since the time of the last inspection when this was a key issue for development. A wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities contribute to this provision. These include theatre visits to see works performed by regional and national companies, visits to a poetry conference and to a wide variety of musical events. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of cultural styles in music and art and to a range of multicultural literature in English. Drama and the extra-curricular opportunities of the drama club provide further enhancement to this provision. Pupils are introduced to aspects of their own cultural heritage in history and to the religious

and cultural diversity of modern life in religious education. They may also go on visits to concerts and art galleries, local arts festivals, London and the Houses of Parliament and to a variety of different places of worship. They are encouraged to reflect on cultural differences in their study of geography, and the impact of new technology on society and cultural life, both nationally and internationally, in ICT. There are good opportunities for developing pupils' understanding of multicultural society in art, English, music, history, geography, religious education and music.

Sixth form

46. The sixth form offers a broad curriculum that caters well for the needs of its students. In addition to the National Curriculum courses followed at GCSE, students can take a flexible advanced vocational course in business which can be taken at two levels. In partnership with Tamworth and Lichfield College the school also offers a good range of vocational subjects under the Training Opportunities Post 16 (TOPS) scheme. Under this scheme Year 12 students continue learning the three key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT at the school, while experiencing the world of work and following their chosen vocational course at the college. This scheme responds well to the needs of students for whom an AS or A2 level course would be inappropriate and answers the criticism in the previous report that the school made little provision for students of lower attainment. Students appreciate the courses on offer in the sixth form and are mostly pleased with the choices they have made.
47. Outside their chosen courses students have good opportunities to broaden and enrich their experience. All students follow courses in general studies and personal, social and health education and have a weekly session of recreational sport. Careers advice is available to everyone in the sixth form through the head of sixth and the team of tutors, and well supplemented by the local careers adviser. The school is not fulfilling its statutory obligation to offer a course in religious education and there is no act of worship for sixth form students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school continues to give a high priority to pastoral care. Year heads and form tutors dedicate significant amounts of time to supporting pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour or develop attendance problems. The cheerful, helpful staff on the reception desk play a significant part in supporting pupils, helping to solve minor organisational problems and offering first aid. The headteacher knows pupils well and is actively involved in promoting pupils' welfare.
49. However, whilst the pastoral system offers good quality care and support at present is it not sufficiently focused on raising standards by closely monitoring pupils' academic achievement and personal development. There are effective procedures to monitor the progress of pupils involved in GCSE examinations and there is an established mentoring scheme to support underachieving pupils. Test and examination results are analysed well to provide information to assist the setting of targets for pupils on GCSE courses. In individual subject departments these analyses are often used well with Year 10 and 11 pupils. However, the school lacks effective procedures to monitor the overall achievements of its younger pupils and targets are not routinely set. In art and design and design and technology, for example, assessment and target setting for Year 9 pupils is unsatisfactory. In geography and history, target setting is limited to pupils on GCSE courses.

Assessment of pupils' progress in ICT and music, though, is good, and there is some effective use of target setting in religious education. Year heads and form tutors make a considerable effort to develop good relationships with pupils and parents but year teams do not move up with pupils and opportunities to sustain relationships and provide pupils and parents with some continuity of care are missed.

50. There are good arrangements to collect and analyse information about pupils with known special educational needs in primary school. All new pupils are screened on entry to identify those who may have special needs. All pupils at Stage 2 or above on the register of special needs have an IEP with specific subject targets which are reviewed termly. Additional support for pupils is well targeted on the basis of need. Annual reviews of pupils with statements of special needs are well informed.
51. The school has good procedures in place for child protection. There is a coherent policy and the named person and teaching staff have had recent child protection training. However, neither the policy nor the staff handbook identifies the named person. A member of staff is responsible for the welfare of pupils in the care of the local authority but as yet this named person has had no training. The school has sensible procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe and experience safe use of the Internet.
52. The monitoring of personal development is satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in practice. In Year 8 personal development is carefully monitored and pupils are rewarded for their positive attitudes, in Years 7 and 9 the monitoring of personal development is restricted to a comment in the pupil's end of year report.
53. The monitoring of attendance is good. The majority of parents are very good about contacting the school if their children are absent. If the school has not had a message it contacts parents on the first day of absence. The system works very well and alerts parents at a very early stage if their children are truanting. Consequently, rates of unauthorised absence are low. The computerised registration system is used very well to identify pupils with attendance problems. The school has very good support from the educational welfare officer who, with the appropriate year head, interviews all pupils whose absence falls below 80 per cent.
54. The school has effective procedures in place to monitor and promote good behaviour. Experienced teachers have well developed strategies and usually make little demand on the school's systems for managing behaviour. There are good systems in place for monitoring; these include reports, detentions and a final resort of placing pupils in internal exclusion in the "Zone". The Zone is used judiciously by most staff. At present the monitoring of the use of the Zone is insufficiently rigorous and the accommodation is barely satisfactory. The Zone is used along with anger management courses to try to reduce exclusions and to keep challenging pupils in school.
55. The school's procedures to prevent bullying or oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. Year heads do try to address bullying issues when they arise. The school has recently introduced a system of peer counselling but it is too early to judge success. Although many parents were satisfied with the school's response to allegations of bullying a significant number have limited confidence in the school's systems. The school has not completed any bullying surveys that might identify exactly where the problems lie. Individual teachers do tackle racism where it arises but the school does not keep an adequate record of racist incidents.

Sixth form

Assessment

56. Procedures for assessing students' work are good. In most subjects work is regularly and accurately assessed and students are given good feedback on their progress and how to improve. The school is currently introducing a system for reviewing students' progress in subjects, setting targets on the basis of prior attainment and action planning through one-to-one interviews with the tutor. Parents are informed of the results of reviews. Clear target grades are given in most subjects but in mathematics target setting is informal and in need of further development. Assessment procedures are very good in English and good in geography, where students are involved in termly self-review.

Advice, support and guidance

57. The school has good induction procedures. The process starts with an open evening which informs students of their options for post-16 education. They can collect a sixth form prospectus which contains very detailed information about the content of AS and A2 courses. There is a formal induction week in July where pupils can sample lessons before they make their final decisions about which course to take. The good induction procedures help to ensure that pupils select courses appropriate to their needs, aspirations and academic abilities and as a result drop out rates are relatively low.
58. The school has responded to pupils' needs. Students who would find AS courses too challenging at present are able to make the transition by access to the TOPS course which consists of GNVQ courses at college, work experience and studying key skills at school. Students value this course and feel that they are well provided for. Students operate in a generally safe environment. Although many express dissatisfaction with the sixth form common room, it provides greater space than those found in many schools. Unfortunately the area forms a corridor between different parts of the school.
59. Students generally get very good support from subject teachers. Students report that subject teachers are very easy to approach and are willing to help. Students acknowledge that the head of sixth form provides good information and support but due to other commitments in school he is sometimes difficult to find. Attendance is well monitored and the head of sixth form is well aware of any attendance or punctuality issues.
60. Students receive effective advice about careers and university admission. They report that they feel fortunate in having access to a specialist post-16 careers advisor whose support they find invaluable.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education offered by the school. They are supportive of the school and want their children to do well. Parents believe that teaching is good, pupils are expected to work hard, that they make good progress and that the school is well managed and approachable. Inspectors agree that teaching by permanent staff is good, though take the view that overall, teaching is only satisfactory because of the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching by temporary staff. Parents encourage their children to attend school regularly and support school events. They support sporting and musical events and are very willing to ferry their children about. A small number of dedicated parents are involved in the Chasetown

School Association and organise events that raise valuable funds for the school. There are regular parenting classes for parents to help them support their children through adolescence.

62. Homework planners are used well. Parents are encouraged to sign planners, and tutors regularly check that pupils are using planners correctly. However, a significant number of parents are dissatisfied with provision of homework. Some parents feel there is too much homework but more parents feel that there is insufficient homework or menial homework tasks or colouring in. During the inspection a sensible amount of homework was set and there was little evidence of low level or trivial tasks.
63. A significant number of parents were not satisfied with the way the school works with parents. Whilst year heads and form tutors aim to have good contact with parents there is no school policy that might encourage pastoral staff and subject teachers to respond promptly to parents' concerns. The school produces a good range of information about its work. The prospectus is in two parts. There is a well-presented glossy brochure and a very informative booklet that contains very clear information about the day-to-day working of the school. The governors' annual report to parents contains all the information required by law but does not adequately reflect the positive atmosphere and work of the school.
64. Some parents are concerned about the quality of information relating to their children's progress. There are a good number of opportunities for parents to come into school to discuss their children's work. For example, there is an opportunity for parents to meet tutors early in Year 7 and subject review days have been introduced in Year 10 where parents can discuss their children's targets and progress with the form tutor. In addition there are traditional subject evenings but some parents are concerned about lack of privacy when all subject teachers are crowded into the dining hall.
65. There are good contacts with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Where possible, contact is made before a pupil arrives in the school. There is very good parental involvement in annual reviews. Parents are kept informed of any changes made in provision for pupils with special needs. Parents of these pupils are very supportive of the school.
66. The quality of written information on pupils' progress is barely satisfactory. The interim reports published in Years 7 and 10 give parents very little information and parents do not necessarily know what exactly the judgements of good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory mean. There is often insufficient information for tutors to feed back from at review evenings. End of year reports for Years 7 to 9 are of poor quality. National Curriculum levels are rarely reported in Years 7 and 8 and there is little indication of what children know, understand and can do, so parents are unable make a well informed judgement about progress. History reports are consistently of better quality than other subjects. Reports improve slightly when pupils are studying for GCSE examinations. Mathematics reports contain far more detail than in Years 7 to 9, however reports remain generally unsatisfactory. The targets set on reports are often weak and consist of generalisations such as "try harder" or "keep up the good work".

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The leadership of senior staff under the direction of the headteacher is good. A generally productive ethos prevails in the school, in which learning can flourish. The school has a very clear sense of direction and there is a purposeful focus on raising standards.
68. Arrangements for performance management and regular appraisal of teaching are fully in place. As a result, there is little unsatisfactory teaching by permanent members of staff. Departmental reviews, recently introduced, have so far been carried out with about half of the school's departments. These reviews involve the observation of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work. They are effective in highlighting strengths and weaknesses, though action on their findings is not always sufficiently vigorous. A measure of unsatisfactory teaching in English, for example, is still apparent in spite of a well-conducted review which identified shortcomings. Support has been put in place, but action has not been sufficiently robust to improve the situation. The overall position across the school, though, is satisfactory. In mathematics, for example, there is regular monitoring of lessons by the head of department and pupils' work is scrutinised. Monitoring is good in geography. Some heads of department, however, are still not vigorous enough in monitoring the quality of teaching and taking steps to make improvements. There is, for example, only informal monitoring in design and technology, ICT and art and design. Test and examination data are analysed carefully and results are used well to monitor the effectiveness of departments.
69. On the whole, departments are managed well. The mathematics department is managed very well. There are, however, shortcomings in the management of science. The department has not effectively addressed the issues raised in the last report. There is a lack of co-ordination of curriculum planning and of efforts to improve teaching methods. Good practice is not shared effectively and the failure to improve pupils' investigative skills in particular has an adverse effect on their achievements.
70. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are very well managed by the co-ordinator. Timetables and reviews operate smoothly and records are very well kept. There are good communications with subject departments and all teachers are made aware of IEPs and pupils on the register of special needs. The co-ordinator has produced a very helpful handbook for all teachers on the characteristics of pupils with special needs and appropriate teaching strategies. The co-ordinator is aware of the new Code of Practice and has considered its implications for training and organisation. The school is well placed to take on the new arrangements.
71. Planning has improved considerably. The school development plan is a sensible document which includes costs and criteria for estimating effectiveness. The recently appointed headteacher has brought a new sharpness to the identification of priorities for development, which are closely focused on efforts to raise standards by improving the quality of provision. Departmental plans are also good and fit well into the school's overarching priorities. Development planning in mathematics is particularly good. There is good, careful financial planning in which governors are fully involved. An apparent considerable surplus in the school's budget in the last full year was caused mostly by delays in starting programmes of building refurbishment

which then delayed expenditure into the next financial year. The school relates closely to the local education authority when buying goods and services and there are effective systems in place to ensure best value.

72. Governors discharge their responsibilities well. They take a strategic view of their role and strike a proper balance in their effective relationship with the headteacher and senior staff, who in turn serve them well. They know and support the school well and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. With the support of the headteacher they monitor effectiveness and financial systems.
73. The staffing situation is unsatisfactory. At the time of the inspection, 11 posts were being covered by temporary or supply staff because of a series of resignations and illnesses. The school has moved vigorously to correct this situation for next year and eight new staff had already been appointed at the time of the inspection. The current shortfall of permanent teachers to key posts has resulted in an over-reliance on supply and temporary teachers which has adversely affected several departments. Inspectors saw some good teaching by these staff, who have tried hard to support the school, but nevertheless about a half the unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was in lessons taught by temporary and supply teachers. In ICT, for example, standards have been adversely affected in Years 7 to 9 by such teaching. In design and technology, long-term illness also has affected provision. In English, a substantial number of teachers have major responsibilities outside the department with the result that classes have to be shared between teachers. Some art teaching by a non-specialist teacher has also affected standards. Staffing in geography however is now good. It is taught by specialists throughout. Newly qualified teachers have been very well supported by the senior teachers as well as by the local education authority. The school has a very good induction programme for newly qualified teachers. Department heads new to the school, however, in spite of the good induction policy in place, have not all been adequately supported in the early stages.
74. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school is situated on a compact and well maintained site which is almost free of litter. Although very good use is made of modern languages classrooms these are not ideally placed, one room being situated at a distance from the others. This adversely affects the ease of management of the department. Mathematics accommodation is also dispersed and the department also has to make use of two temporary classrooms. Music accommodation however is all together and the extra provision of the stage and theatre for much of the timetable has relieved the pressure for space during small group work, particularly when instrumental teachers are working. Geography has good, spacious accommodation and science has sufficient large laboratories. Greater flexibility is achieved in information and communication technology with the use of laptops in addition to three specialist rooms.
75. Resources for the main school curriculum are satisfactory overall. There are strengths and weaknesses. There are adequate texts in English and several computers there support pupils' learning. Insufficient textbooks in modern foreign languages and geography mean that pupils have to share in class, which restricts effective learning. There are also insufficient texts for pupils to use for homework. The art department has good reference sources and good quality art materials. In science, although laboratory equipment is satisfactory overall, there are insufficient accurate pH meters. Although the overall ratio of computers to pupils, laptops included, is above the national average for the whole school, several departments

report limited access or insufficient specialised hardware and software within the departments. In design and technology, computer-aided design is very limited. The art department needs better computer software. In science there are insufficient computers and limited access to data loggers. Music needs more specialised computers with keyboards to continue the good work started with composition. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory.

76. Although the library has quite a large number of books, many are old. Older paperbacks have been replaced with new, and the hardback stock is due to be replaced on a rolling programme. The fiction section is larger than average. Literature, criticism and biography texts are good and easy reading books are attractively displayed. The library is used for lessons. There is limited stock for the AVCE business studies programme and the provision of texts for art in the sixth form is poor. The librarian is responsive to requests to support subjects, compiling boxes of relevant texts for projects as required. Five computers and 30 laptops are available for booking by all departments. All subject areas have access to the library. Students are given the responsibility of acting as librarian assistants.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

77. Planning and responsibility for day-to-day management are very effectively carried out by the head of sixth form. Management of students' support, guidance and personal development is good. Development planning for the sixth form is good and the views of students and teachers have been sought. The quality of teaching is monitored. Attainment, the recruitment to, and retention of students on courses are monitored and good use is made of assessment data to provide predictions of A-level results, set targets and to calculate value added. Governors take an active interest in the sixth form.

Resources

78. Staffing in the sixth form is good. There are sufficient well qualified teachers with experience and expertise in their subjects. The AVCE in business studies will benefit from the appointment of a new head of department from Easter 2002 and this is expected to give better stability to the department, which has suffered from a shortage of permanent teachers. Geography too has suffered similarly in the last year, but the problems have now been resolved.
79. The sixth form accommodation is good. Students make use of a large common room and a study area with computers. All subjects have at least satisfactory accommodation and many are good, such as history and religious education. Art has its own sixth form study area and students in music make good use of the small technology rooms within the department. Geography accommodation for the sixth form is very good. The accommodation for the AVCE in business studies is unsatisfactory, however. There is no base room and teaching has to take place in a range of non-specialist rooms.
80. Resources in the sixth form are good overall. Mathematics students use modern relevant texts of good quality for their studies and there are sufficient new books to support AS and A-level work in science. However, lack of sufficiently accurate pH meters restricts some sixth form work and lack of data logging equipment also affects standards adversely.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. The school's senior managers and governors are in a strong position to ensure that the weaknesses identified in this report are remedied. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of provision further, they should:
- (1) ensure that as soon as possible there are enough permanent, well-qualified teachers to meet the needs of pupils and the curriculum;
Paragraphs: 19, 20, 73, 89, 98, 122, 130, 131, 153.
 - (2) take steps to ensure that the underachievement in English is remedied through better monitoring and more determined and rigorous support and development of the quality of teaching;
Paragraphs: 22, 68, 73, 88, 89, 92.
 - (3) remedy the underachievement of lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 by improving the management of the science department. The issues raised in the last report must be addressed and there needs to be better co-ordination of curriculum planning and efforts to improve teaching methods. In particular, provision to raise the level of pupils' investigative skills must be improved;
Paragraphs: 4, 24, 114, 116, 117.
 - (4) extend the systems for monitoring progress and target setting in Years 10 and 11 to younger pupils;
Paragraphs: 49, 104, 123, 131.
 - (5) improving provision for pupils' spiritual development by raising the awareness of teachers and including this aspect in departmental planning;
Paragraph: 42.

Sixth form

- (1) Introduce religious education and collective worship so that statutory requirements are met.
Paragraph: 47.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 13	142
	Sixth form	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	3	33	46	43	13	2	0
Percentage	2	24	33	31	9	1	0

Sixth form

Number	0	5	17	12	0	0	0
Percentage	0	15	50	35	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	749	87
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	62	0

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	100	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	53	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	74	57	131

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	49	59
	Girls	37	39	38
	Total	74	88	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	56 (74)	67 (69)	74 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (69)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (28)	48 (52)	34 (33)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	53	61
	Girls	49	43	34
	Total	97	96	95
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (57)	73 (69)	73 (74)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (37)	46 (52)	36 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	15	18	33

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	18.8	20.9	20	7	4.7	5.6
National	17.8	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	3	67
	National		73.2

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	818
Any other minority ethnic group	12

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	40	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y 13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y 7 – Y 13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	191.5

Deployment of teachers: Y 7 – Y 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
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Average teaching group size: Y 7 – Y 11

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	22.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2,098,798
Total expenditure	2,005,003
Expenditure per pupil	2,362
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,890
Balance carried forward to next year	100,684

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.8

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.2
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	836
Number of questionnaires returned	208

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	7	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	55	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	54	16	5	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	59	16	5	3
The teaching is good.	20	70	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	51	16	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	52	3	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	50	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	48	20	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	25	58	7	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	54	9	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	45	9	5	9

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

- There is some very good teaching.
- Girls do well in tests and examinations.
- The progress made by pupils with special needs.
- Support for reading through the paired reading scheme.
- The range of extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment at GCSE.
- The quality of some teaching.
- The performance of boys.
- The further development of assessment.
- Senior management support for the department.

82. The standards in English of pupils entering the school in Year 7 are improving. The school now has considerable data on standards. When last year's Year 9 entered the school their attainment was below average. By the end of Year 9 in 2001 these pupils were average in the National Curriculum tests in comparison with all schools. However, below average numbers of pupils achieved Level 5 and above, indicating that there are fewer higher attainers in the school than one might expect. When compared to similar schools pupils are below average on points score but well below at the higher levels. Girls do better than boys by a greater margin than nationally. Pupils do better in mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 than they do in English. Performance in the Year 9 test was improving steadily year on year until 2001, when results dipped. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels also declined in 2001.
83. At the end of Year 11 in 2001 the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A* to C was close to the national average. The average points score was in line with that achieved nationally. The school enters slightly more pupils than are entered nationally. All pupils entered achieved a grade but there were very few A* and A grades in comparison with the national figures. Results in English were better in 2001 than the previous year but were not as high as in 1999. Girls did better than boys and as well as girls nationally. Boys' performance was below that of boys nationally. The department now enters more of its pupils for the literature examination than in previous years – the proportion entered is in line with national entry levels. Results in English literature were below average for both boys and girls. All pupils who were entered passed the examination but again there were very few pupils attaining the highest grades. Results in English literature were well above average in 1999 and 2000 when fewer pupils were entered.
84. The department offers drama as an optional subject in Years 10 and 11. In recent years GCSE results have fluctuated considerably. In 2001, GCSE results in drama were above average and were much better than in the previous year. All pupils passed although very few attained the highest grades.

85. Overall standards in lessons at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are average. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory given pupils' starting point in Year 7. Most pupils read quite fluently and with understanding although some reading aloud by pupils in upper and middle sets in Years 8 and 10 lacks expression or evident awareness of punctuation. Lower attainers in Year 10 have difficulty with reading but try hard and make good progress. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 made good progress in learning and understanding the narrative of *Flannan Isle*, although their vocabulary and understanding were below average. Overall standards of writing are average. Higher attainers in Year 8 write fluently and their work is well presented. Some higher attaining pupils write at length and use vivid and expressive language. One pupil wrote of 'a formal suit that smelt of importance and power'. Pupils in Year 11 have produced some very fluent writing for GCSE coursework. Higher attaining pupils' writing demonstrates good command of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Pupils develop their ideas well, for example, in a piece of coursework comparing two short stories. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 can identify literary devices such as alliteration and are able to comment easily on the use of imagery in a poem. Average attainers are less fluent and express a more limited range of ideas. Overall, speaking and listening skills are average. Most pupils are quite confident, willing to participate in discussion and answer questions. Fewer pupils use very sophisticated vocabulary to develop and sustain their ideas in discussion than might be expected, although higher attainers in Year 11 working on pantomime had very good oral skills and were able to express themselves uninhibitedly in role. Progress in the development of speaking and listening is hindered by limited opportunity in some lessons. Some pupils are frustrated by their limited ability to express ideas. Pupils always listen well and most make good sense of what they hear. In drama, Year 7 pupils demonstrated good oral skills and made perceptive observations in their group work. After discussion, pupils in a higher attaining Year 9 group were able to create a tableau in which the characters from a scene from *Twelfth Night* were identifiable.
86. Pupils with special needs and lower attaining pupils make good progress. Of the 25 pupils who were on the special needs register and entered for GCSE in 2001, 23 gained passes in English and 13 gained passes in both English and English literature. Twenty six pupils in the current Year 9 had reading ages below their chronological age on entry to the school. By the end of the spring term in Year 8 only six required additional support.
87. Most pupils work well in pairs and groups and support each other well. They settle to their work, and stay on task. They listen well and respond well to instructions. They are interested and positive about the subject. They are polite and many are mature and sensible. Most pupils are keen to be involved and welcome opportunities for active participation in lessons.
88. Overall, the quality of teaching in the department is satisfactory. There is, however, some excellent teaching in the department and some that is not satisfactory. The best lessons are carefully planned and presented with enthusiasm. Relationships are very positive and pupils are keen to participate. They enjoy these lessons, have fun and make very good progress. Effective, sometimes creative, strategies are used. In an excellent Year 8 lesson pupils worked very hard considering the meaning and impact of words. They were first asked to order words according to their intensity, for example "cold" and "frozen". This was done initially as an active task requiring pupils to move about in order to sequence the words but as the lesson

moved on they were introduced to personification and discussed the effect of this in a poem. By the end of the lesson pupils were using personification in their own writing. Pupils are kept busy throughout these lessons and know exactly what is expected of them because they are given clear explanations and parameters to tasks. Expectations in the best lessons are very high and tasks are challenging. Pupils respond well and their interest is sustained because the lesson moves along with pace. Work is very well marked with encouraging and constructive comments and achievable targets for improvement are set. Lessons are arranged so that boys and girls sit and work together. Lessons end with a brief review of learning.

89. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils have little opportunity to be involved because the teacher dominates the lessons. The pace is very slow and the range of tasks set very narrow. Sometimes very low level tasks are set which do not challenge pupils. Too little is expected and pupils are allowed to waste time. Too little structure and guidance is provided so that pupils are faced with tasks which are so big that they do not know where to start or what to do. In these lessons pupils do their best but make little progress. Marking is brief and does not help pupils to move forward. Overall teaching and learning in drama during the inspection was not satisfactory in part because of some unsatisfactory teaching by temporary staff.
90. The arrangements made for lower attaining and special needs pupils are good. They are placed in small sets, are generally taught by a teacher with a particular interest in the teaching of literacy, and have good access to the curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11, where they are entered for GCSE as well as an alternative accredited course. The school is aware of a problem with a small number of pupils who are wrongly placed in low attaining sets as a result of timetabling systems. There are good strategies to promote reading, especially for younger pupils. In particular, the paired reading system is very effective and well organised. Pupils mainly in Year 7 with reading difficulties read regularly most mornings to a sixth form student. Pupils have regular lessons in the library where their reading records are kept. Good relationships exist between pupils and students and the scheme is beneficial to both. The department has put considerable effort into planning for the national Framework for teaching English though this is not yet well established in the classroom. The school has a policy on literacy but the emphasis given to literacy by subject areas is patchy. Some areas do not have a planned approach. Attempts in the English department to introduce the Progress Units for pupils at Level 3 in Year 7 have foundered. The significant number of pupils who enter the school at a standard just below average would benefit from additional support in basic literacy.
91. The department is well informed of pupils' prior attainment and is beginning to make use of the assessment data but at present it is not yet well-integrated into practice and planning. Although the quality of assessment is satisfactory it should be more frequent and common to whole year groups rather than to single classes, to ensure that standards improve and teachers' assessment are accurate. Curriculum planning is very good but is not used well by all teachers. The content of some lessons is not well adapted to pupils' levels of attainment. The department has made some effort to address the low attainment of boys through training but this is not evident in all classrooms.
92. There are nine teachers in the English department. Only the head and second of department have the subject as their prime responsibility. Nearly all other members of the department have major responsibilities in the school. The head of department offers good leadership of the subject and is aware of areas in need of development.

Development planning is good and well focused. The head of department organises in-service training for the department and there is some monitoring of teaching and pupils' work. Where unsatisfactory teaching has been observed, though, the response has been insufficiently robust. Dynamic and focused support from senior management is necessary to tackle unsatisfactory teaching. The department makes a strong contribution to pupils' extra-curricular opportunities. A school play is produced every year; there are visits to the theatre and opportunities for public speaking. There have been workshops run by visiting companies.

93. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 had been improving, until the last year. GCSE results in English have improved. Pupils with special educational needs now make good progress. It is still the case that girls do better than boys by a greater margin than nationally. The profile of teaching remains broadly similar. The department continues to offer good extra-curricular opportunities.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is good teaching by permanent staff.
- There is good, well organised management.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils, which lead to positive attitudes in class.
- The achievement of lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good, especially at GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few top grades at GCSE and too few opportunities targeted on gifted and talented mathematicians.
- Reports to parents are inconsistent across the department and do not always convey the necessary information.

94. GCSE examination results in 2001 were below the national average in terms of grades A* to C but were average in terms of the overall average points score. These results were below those obtained in previous years, where the results in terms of grades A* to C have been close to national averages. At the end of Year 9 in national tests, results were broadly average. Boys and girls do equally well.
95. The cohort of pupils who sat the GCSE examination in 2001 entered the school with below average attainment, and boys were at a lower standard than girls. Achievement in 2001 GCSE was good, and boys' achievement was higher than that of girls. All pupils in Year 11 were entered for GCSE in 2001 and all pupils obtained at least a grade G. However, there is a lack of higher grades with very few pupils reaching A* or A, and achievement by higher attaining pupils is less good than other pupils' achievement.
96. Pupils who took national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 entered the school with below average attainment and their results, which were average, also represent good achievement. In general, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is better than that in Years 10 and 11 although achievement is good overall. However, this does not

reflect on the teaching and learning seen during the inspection where the teaching of classes in Years 10 and 11 was at least as good as the teaching of classes in Years 7 to 9.

97. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that most are being challenged appropriately, and that overall standards are broadly average by the end of Years 9 and 11. The National Curriculum is taught in full, an improvement on the previous inspection where the delivery of the syllabus was erratic. The impact of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has clearly had a beneficial effect on the attainment in Year 7. Exercise books are generally neat and tidy throughout the school and contain evidence of good effort by pupils. There are some examples of very good coursework in Year 11. Although most pupils' work has been marked there are inconsistencies across the department in terms of thoroughness of marking. Further, there is little evidence of helpful comments and work is not graded to National Curriculum levels. The use of homework is not always effective.
98. Teaching seen during the inspection to pupils of all ages was at least satisfactory; most teaching was good and some was very good. Lessons taught by permanent members of staff were well focused, showed good management of pupils and good classroom organisation. In these lessons there were effective question and answer sessions, which involved all pupils in discussion. This approach produced good attitudes and a positive working environment, leading to good progress. However, in some lessons taught by supply or temporary staff, lessons lacked focus, pupils became disengaged and teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. Overall, teaching has improved from the previous inspection when lessons were not clear and teachers relied too heavily on textbooks.
99. The teaching of numeracy within the department is good – Year 7 lessons follow the National Numeracy Strategy of a three-part lesson with numeracy reinforcement and this promotes good learning of basic skills. A cross-curricular numeracy policy has been developed and is implemented in other departments. The teaching of numeracy in geography shows much good practice; in science, however, although numeracy is taught satisfactorily, the impact of the numeracy policy is less clear.
100. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups by the school's special needs co-ordinator. Here, effective teaching enables such pupils to gain confidence and make good gains in knowledge and skills. This is an improvement on the previous report, when the performance of lower attaining pupils was unsatisfactory. The GCSE results in 2001 (where all pupils passed the examination) confirm the good achievement of lower attaining pupils. There are also some learning support assistants who follow pupils with statements of special educational needs from class to class. Where they are present, support assistants are effective.
101. The achievement of gifted and talented pupils at GCSE is a matter for attention. These pupils are identified by the department using test results at the end of Year 6 and by liaison with primary schools. These findings are then confirmed by internal tests held in October of Year 7. Much is done to challenge such pupils. Higher attainers work towards a qualification set by the Foundation for Advanced Mathematics and do well. Currently three pupils in Year 8 have taken the opportunity to visit Staffordshire University; other extra-curricular opportunities for talented pupils are through the national mathematics challenge. The school enters pupils at three levels. Last year about 110 pupils took advantage of this scheme and

some gained creditable certification. There are other extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils, including extra classes after school to help boost examination performance. Even so, there are still too few higher GCSE grades.

102. The positive ethos of the department means that pupils respect property and do not abuse equipment. Pupils work well singly or in pairs. They are generally polite and conduct themselves in a mature way.
103. The leadership of the department is very good. The scheme of work is comprehensive but accessible and the departmental development plan is clear and relevant. Important issues (such as the continued implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and the involvement of pupils in their own learning) are addressed appropriately. The department contains mostly experienced teachers together with two temporary members of staff. With appropriate appointments it has the potential to become a strong team. In recent years, girls have usually out-performed boys significantly at GCSE. In an attempt to raise the achievement of boys the department has started a new modular examination in Year 10. The department also hopes that this style of examination will boost the number of A* and A grades.
104. The schemes of assessment are satisfactory but the setting of targets for pupils is in the early stages of development. Assessment data are used to indicate progress and set targets, and pupils are made aware of these targets. Reports to parents are inconsistent and need to be improved. The best reports are for some Year 11 pupils and make clear the potential grade of a pupil and also the current level of attainment. Sharp writing explains the difference between the grades and the areas for improvement. Other reports, however, (especially in Years 7 to 9) are less clear; they do not indicate grade targets and the targets for improvement are mundane.
105. The head of department regularly monitors other mathematics staff by observing lessons and reviewing exercise books. Currently this monitoring is largely confined to Year 7 lessons. Other members of staff also observe other teachers' lessons with the aim of sharing best practice. A recent review of the department carried out by senior management was thorough.
106. The use of computers is good. Computer rooms are reserved for mathematics lessons during the year and pupils have access to the school's computer facilities roughly once every six weeks. In these lessons there is an imaginative approach to use a variety of software to help teach the current mathematics topic. The work produced in these sessions is generally of good quality. Some pupils choose to use ICT facilities to improve the presentation of GCSE coursework. The routine use of calculators in mathematics lessons is appropriate.
107. The standard of accommodation is satisfactory; most classrooms are spacious and well lit. However, the mathematics classrooms do not form a closely-knit suite of rooms. Most walls have adequate displays of pupils' work as well as some instructive wall charts. Key words for the subject, however, do not appear on classroom walls and they do not usually form part of a lesson. Developing this strategy would support literacy across the school. There is a lack of multicultural stimuli in the mathematics area; worksheets and wall displays do not reflect the essential multicultural society in which we live. There are sufficient textbooks in the department so that most pupils have access to one in the classroom and at home.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good quality of course planning for science in Years 7 to 9 and for biology in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Good use of ICT in some lessons.
- Good achievement at GCSE by higher attaining pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory leadership of the department.
- Poor coordination of the teaching program across the department.
- Inconsistency in teaching methods and ineffective management of the quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11. Some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Development of pupils' investigative skills.
- There is underachievement by many lower attaining pupils, particularly boys, in Years 10 and 11.

108. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 was above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching level 6 was about average, as was overall points score. Since 1997 there has been a significant and sustained improvement in these test results that is better than the national picture. The results obtained by boys and girls are very similar and science test results are much the same as those obtained by pupils in mathematics and English. Before coming to the school pupils' achievements in science are below average and they therefore make good progress in science in Years 7 to 9.
109. The number of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination in 2001 was close to the national average and very similar results have been gained since 1997. Although many boys gained high GCSE grades their performance was significantly worse than that of girls. Overall, an above average proportion of pupils gained a grade in the A* - C range. Lower attaining pupils, especially boys, often did substantially less well in science than in their other subjects. Overall progress between Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory.
110. Inspection evidence shows that standards achieved by pupils, including those with special needs, towards the end of Year 9, are above average. In general, pupils have a good knowledge of the facts and principles of science and at times it is very good. In lessons about smoking and alcoholism they have a very clear understanding of the health and social implications of these habits and in another lesson they learned about the Earth and other planets, achieving a good level of understanding. Practical work about chemical reactions is recorded thoroughly in pupils' books.
111. By the end of Year 11 standards are average. The work done by the higher attaining pupils is above average but there is a significant number of lower attaining pupils, especially boys, who do less well than they should. In lessons about atoms, the development of the embryo and human inheritance, higher attaining pupils achieve a standard that is well above average. They develop a clear understanding of difficult ideas about weight, mass and gravity. Pupils in the middle of the attainment range

do well when learning about food but lower attaining pupils' knowledge of ideas about radiation, power transmission and transformers is below average and less than they are capable of. Practical skills are above average; pupils successfully used heat to decompose chemical compounds, but their investigative skills are below average.

112. In science lessons, pupils' literacy is satisfactory. In a lesson about the planets pupils demonstrated good presentation skills; higher attaining pupils are articulate and well able to explain their ideas. Some pupils are more hesitant in these circumstances and need more support. Graphs and calculations are done well: pupils' numeracy is good.
113. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good. In Years 10 and 11 and overall it is satisfactory. The progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. The best lessons have clear objectives and are well planned; the teaching is interesting and dynamic and often contains a variety of well-chosen activities that interest pupils. For example, in a lesson about alcohol pupils used the Internet to carry out research and more demanding tasks were available for higher attaining pupils. In a lesson about growing up the teacher made good use of a reading research task and discussion dealt skilfully with sensitive issues. In these lessons relationships are very good and pupils gain in confidence and make good progress in their learning. Teachers explain ideas and tasks carefully so that pupils are confident that they know and understand what to do. In a lesson about gravity in which a toy car moved down a slope, careful explanation of the scale used in a graph of the results ensured that pupils were successful. In these lessons expectations were high and practical skills were well taught. Between Years 7 and 9 particularly good use is made of a variety of teaching strategies that meet the needs of pupils well. Presentations, group discussions and extended writing, about noise pollution for example, are used regularly and as a consequence pupils make good progress. Few lessons contain examples of investigative work and pupils do not make sufficient progress in this aspect of science. In some lessons the pace is slower and opportunities to interest pupils, for example by using video, are missed.
114. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of lessons are at least satisfactory but there is a significant number that are unsatisfactory and this is not confined to teachers on short-term contracts or supply teachers. The more successful lessons have the same features as those taught during Years 7 to 9. In a lesson about weight and gravity a very careful and well-structured explanation ensured that pupils could calculate the gravitational potential energy of the same object on the Earth and on the moon. Well-prepared information sheets are used effectively, as in a lesson about why chemical reactions may be fast or slow. At other times lessons are not well prepared, pupils are given the wrong work to do and too much time is spent copying or answering questions from a textbook. In lessons about radiation and power transmission, explanations were too brief and pupils were unsure and did not understand what they were to do. These lessons were dominated by the teacher and pupils had no opportunities to work independently. Lower attaining pupils, particularly boys, make insufficient progress as a consequence of unsatisfactory or undemanding teaching. Investigative science is not taught often enough and pupils do not make enough progress in this aspect of their work.
115. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11; they are good overall. The majority of pupils are well behaved, they are interested in science and curious about the things they learn. Practical work is

carried out carefully and responsibly and most pupils are hardworking. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are usually very good. In lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory or undemanding, pupils are uninterested and unwilling to take responsibility for their work. They are uncritical and easily distracted but well behaved. Often they are unwilling to ask for help or to make decisions. Sometimes poor learning skills limit pupils' progress even when teaching is satisfactory.

116. Progress made since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Progress made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is still slower and pupils' investigative skills are still not good enough. Many pupils with special educational needs still do not make enough progress. Lesson planning is still not always effective and work is not matched to the needs of the pupils, so work and motivation deteriorate. This is particularly true of lessons for lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11. Much more use is made of ICT in an often imaginative and effective manner but the department does not have enough data loggers to enable pupils to collect and evaluate data individually and sufficiently frequently.
117. The management of the department is unsatisfactory, although hard work by individual teachers has resulted in a good quality teaching program and very effective lesson planning in Years 7 to 9 as well as in biology in Years 10 and 11. This work has resulted in standards rising in Years 7 to 9 and in more varied and effective teaching in parts of the programme for Years 10 and 11. However, the management of the department has not effectively addressed the issues raised in the last report. There is a lack of co-ordination of curriculum planning and of efforts to improve teaching methods. Good practice is not shared effectively and the failure to improve pupils' investigative skills in particular has an adverse effect on their achievements.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning.
- Levels of achievement.
- Attitudes and relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Leadership and the shared commitment to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching of basic skills in Year 7.
- The teaching of critical studies so that pupils develop a personal view.
- The quality of assessments at the end of Year 9 and the use of assessment information.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Strategies to combat the small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour.

118. Teacher assessments for those pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that well above average numbers, both boys and girls, reached average standards. GCSE results for 2001 were below average. Slightly above average numbers of girls were awarded passes between A* and C but the boys' results were well below the national average for boys. Every pupil was awarded a pass between A* and G. These results were better than those of 2000 but less good than at the time of the last inspection.

119. The work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are close to the national average. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Pupils are beginning to use recently introduced sketchbooks for investigation and experimentation but the majority have yet to fully adjust to this method of working. Only the highest attainers are confident using line to show space, texture and tone. Years 7 and 8 are happier drawing from observation but here again there is some lack of understanding of the use of line, while shading often contradicts or flattens form. Collage is used to create human faces from tissue paper and magazine cuttings, with the students then annotating and evaluating their work. Pupils are often confused between colour and tone. Lino printing is used well and pupils cleverly modify their prints with paint. There is reference to African and Aboriginal art, with pupils looking at the effect of climate, environment and language on painting and crafts. There is also evidence of pupils studying Van Gogh's work with an appreciation of his use of colour and symbolism in *Café at Night*. Drawing in the style of Van Gogh allows pupils further insight into the artist's work. Analysis of Cubism with examples of Georges Braque's painting also adds to pupils' appreciation of art but too often annotation is copied from books or the Internet without a personal response.
120. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 was close to the national average. Observational drawing of food, animals, toys and natural objects occupies a central position in GCSE art. Many drawings tend to be highly finished, presentational drawings rather than vehicles for gathering information on space, form or texture. Multi-coloured lino prints based on fruit or vegetables provide clear evidence of progression. Large scale original paintings and collage developed from observational drawings of natural objects highlight pupils' gains in techniques and understanding of art. A mixed media, almost surrealist painting of a person in the bath holding a tray of leeks, onions, and peppers makes good use of low relief collage to increase its impact. But the drawing in this and other work is often weaker than the composition and reduces its quality. While the balance between investigative and finished work is in favour of finished work, sketchbooks carry increasing evidence of experimentation into colour and shape, leading to original, large-scale paintings. There is a strong dependence on secondary source material as Year 11 pupils prepare for their GCSE examination. Few pupils see the examination as a natural progression from earlier coursework, with little of the work referring to earlier, investigative work in sketchbooks. Pupils use the Internet and CD-ROMs to access information about art and artists but the use of computers to create artwork is not yet fully developed.
121. Achievement overall in art and design is good. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. A period of staff absence and the use of non-specialist or temporary teachers was a time when the basic skills of art were not always well taught. The limited use of computers is slowing progress. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils have improved skills of observation and analysis and make better use of sketchbooks. These older pupils are increasingly confident in their ability to learn for themselves and from each other. They respond to their teachers' enthusiasm and genuine feel for their subject. Pupils do not devote enough time to research the work of famous artists to allow them to make connections between their own work and that of the artists. The achievement of the sixth form students is good. They increasingly know how well they are doing and how they might improve. Pupils who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because their teachers have a clear understanding of their needs. Some classes suffer from a lack of classroom support and teachers spend too much time managing the behaviour of these classes rather than teaching art. Progress in these lessons is slower than

usual. Those pupils who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress and benefit from recently introduced initiatives such as the "Artist of the Month" scheme and teachers giving up much of their own time to the daily Art Club. Not all of the homework is sufficiently well designed to challenge the highest attainers.

122. Teaching and learning overall are good. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations of creativity and behaviour but the teaching of basic skills of drawing and ICT is less effective. Year 8 pupils made rapid gains in knowledge when using their drawings of bones to design imaginative creatures, later to be constructed in clay. The teacher's good subject knowledge, initial demonstration and gentle manner encouraged the class to contribute their ideas and opinions. His insistence on the careful consideration of the properties of clay linked to Henry Moore's sculptural methods, sustained the pace of the lesson and reinforced the department's policy of developing ideas through research and investigation. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. Year 10 pupils made good progress when linking their still-life paintings to those of Matisse, Caulfield, Redon, Lichtenstein and the Spanish artist Frida Kahlo. The teacher's introduction, good classroom management and knowledge of individual pupils were features of the lesson as she circulated, assessing, prompting and encouraging greater efforts. Challenge was a significant feature of the lesson and pupils responded with good creative effort, using acrylic paint in a most experimental way. The girls made better progress because of their better understanding of what they were doing and how they might improve. A Year 11 class had too many pupils for the teacher to deal with in the time available. The boys in the class were less focused than girls who planned their work better and produced better results. Girls are invariably much quicker to settle to their work. There were two unsatisfactory lessons seen. On one occasion a temporary teacher placed too little emphasis on teaching the basic skills of the subject and learning was unsatisfactory. In the other lesson a significant minority of lower attaining Year 9 pupils, both boys and girls, resisted their teacher's best efforts and interfered with their classmates' learning.
123. The curriculum in art and design is satisfactory. Pupils experience working in two and three dimensions in a range of materials, including clay. The lack of specialist software limits opportunities for pupils to generate and manipulate imagery with computers. A small number of junior classes receive two art lessons in the first week of the timetable and none in the second week, making continuity of learning difficult. Assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 is inaccurate and not well related to national standards. Information gathered from assessment is not sufficiently well used to set pupils long and short term targets or to strengthen the curriculum.
124. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a clear and ambitious vision for the future which teachers and pupils are pleased to follow. There is a shared commitment to succeed. Realistic strategic planning for future development is in place. Visits to galleries and museums have been arranged. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in art and design require more rigour.
125. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. After the retirement of the previous head of department, standards fell. The new head of department has introduced a determination to raise standards and GCSE results are improving. Teaching and learning continue to be good. Pupils are increasingly using sketchbooks for personal research, experimentation and investigation. There is little

evidence of pupils improving their knowledge of art and artists or of them making connections between the artists' work and their own. The timetable constraints that had an adverse effect on the development of GCSE work have been resolved. The department has improved and is improving.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Procedures for monitoring pupils' performance.
- Specialist teachers' subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE.
- There is too much reliance on non-specialist and temporary teachers.
- Attainment of boys.

126. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. When pupils arrive in the school their knowledge and skills development in the subject are low. During their first three years in the school they make good progress. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate the majority of pupils are at National Curriculum Level 5. Girls' standards in the subject are better than average whereas boys' are below average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
127. Overall performance at GCSE was below average in 2001. In graphical products and food technology results were well below national figures. Pupils taking the resistant materials course were close to the national average, particularly those taking the short course option. Pupils' performance, though, was broadly similar to that in their other subjects. The 2001 performance represents a fall in comparison with the previous two years when A*-C grades matched national figures. The fluctuation in results reflects differences in pupils' prior attainment from year to year and achievement is satisfactory. Additionally, in 2001, the department was also affected by staffing difficulties, some of which still exist. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average.
128. The majority of pupils entering Year 7 are at a National Curriculum level of between 2 and 3, which is below average. Pupils enter having had a range of experiences relating to design and make processes. Their practical skills are limited, as is the quality of presentation of design ideas. Literacy skills, for a significant number, are below those expected, which impacts on the quality of written work produced. Pupils are helped with their written work but the department does not have a policy for pupils' literacy development. Pupils produce practical work that generally exceeds the quality of the design work. Year 7 pupils working on notepad holders were joining materials using a tenon joint. The task, though clearly demonstrated, proved too challenging for many. The higher attainers in the group completed the task with some degree of accuracy, having marked out the area of wood to be removed. The use of simple hand tools to mark the area to be removed was difficult for some lower attaining pupils to complete successfully within the lesson. Other Year 7 pupils in food technology worked well individually to produce fruit or vegetable salads to a predetermined design. They followed hygiene and safety rules well although a small number did not remove items of jewellery as would be required to meet industry

standards. Year 9 pupils have experience of a good range of materials although opportunities in food and textiles are limited in Years 8 and 9. Higher attaining pupils present their ideas with a greater degree of detail and technical accuracy. ICT is used to enhance presentations and for the control elements. Some of the lower attaining pupils have little knowledge of the characteristics of materials used or the correct applications for the various hand tools. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in lessons through additional help from teachers or learning support staff and make sound progress. In all disciplines pupils' attitudes are at least sound and sometimes good. However, there are times when both boys and girls exhibit challenging behaviour. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are never less than sound and usually good. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but provision for enhancing their progress is still developing.

129. Pupils in Year 11 display mainly sound attitudes towards their chosen subject. They have access to computers, enabling them to enhance the presentation of their work and some choose to use their home computers. In most groups there is a broad range of attainment. Higher attaining pupils in food technology show a good understanding of the design process, explaining clearly the stages of coursework development. Pupils with special educational needs receive support and achieve well. In resistant materials, higher attaining pupils produce products that closely match original designs. They show skills of analysis and evaluation through well-presented portfolios. Less well-motivated pupils demonstrate lower levels of concern about presentation and their lack of commitment also shows in the quality of finish. However, pupils taking graphical products showed a good level of motivation when developing skills of evaluation. Those with lower literacy skills benefited from additional teacher support. An exercise in which pupils evaluated the models of other pupils helped them to appreciate the importance of high quality evaluative statements. They were able to see how the exercise would help improve their chances of success at GCSE.
130. The quality of teaching within the department is generally sound and sometimes good. Many pupils are appreciative of the commitment shown by staff to help them achieve through their availability other than at lesson times. In the better lessons, teachers have clear aims and their learning objectives are clearly thought through, for example in food technology. Planning is thorough and aimed at developing pupils' skills and knowledge. Pupils are challenged, maintaining a good pace throughout the lesson. Staff generally have good specialist knowledge. In the unsatisfactory and less effective lessons there is a lack of pace, planning is inadequate and fails to meet the needs of all pupils. Where this is so learning objectives are usually not clearly expressed.
131. The subject area is managed by an experienced head of department who has had to deal with a range of staffing problems that have had a negative impact on the quality of teaching. Staffing issues remain and the department has to use temporary and non-specialist teachers. The technical support in resistant materials is good but not full time. There is a lack of technician time for the food and textiles area, which places additional pressure on the teacher. Developments in assessment and monitoring procedures have improved since the last inspection. Assessment information is used to set appropriate targets for improvement in Years 10 and 11 but individual target setting is yet to be developed for Years 7 to 9. The head of department does not formally monitor teaching, although observations take place, once each year, as part of the performance management system. Pupils have a broad curriculum of experiences in Years 7 to 9. However, the amount of time spent

in food and textiles is restricted in Years 8 and 9. Option choices are restricted to GCSE resistant materials, graphical products and food technology. Vocational options are currently not available. No students are taking design and technology in Year 12.

132. At the time of the last inspection achievement was satisfactory, which is still broadly the case. Practical skills remain better than the presentation of portfolios. Progress remains sound as does teaching overall. Accommodation is adequate in all areas but staffing has been affected by illness. Overall the department has made satisfactory progress.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising.
- Teaching is good.
- The provision for pupils with special needs is well focused.
- Achievement is good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to literacy and numeracy.
- Development planning is good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in GCSE coursework.
- Too few students choose the subject for GCSE.
- There are too few textbooks for use in Years 10 and 11.
- Setting targets for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

133. Standards are rising. Pupils enter the school with a reasonable grasp of geography. Aided by a progressive syllabus and constant reinforcement, they make good progress through Years 7 to 9, acquiring a broad geographical knowledge especially of place, of contrasting environments and some insight into physical geography. They understand, for example, the link between rainfall and flooding and can interpret a hydrograph. They have well developed map skills and the ability to work independently, fostered by enquiry exercises and local fieldwork. By the end of Year 9, the standards being achieved are above average and significantly higher than in the past.
134. GCSE results are in line with national averages as they were at the time of the previous inspection. In 2001, this represented good achievement by pupils who, typically, gained higher grades in geography than in the other subjects they studied. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was narrower than in the national picture. In 2000, the gap had been very much wider and, affected by staffing weaknesses, results had been poor. The work of current Year 11 pupils is of a similar standard to the 2001 group and they are well served by the out-of-hours revision and coursework programme run by the department. Pupils with special needs make good progress. Take-up in Year 10 is too low and the department is aware of the need to increase the number of pupils opting for the subject for GCSE.
135. Pupils enjoy geography and are keen to participate in question and answer sessions. Their behaviour is very good and their response clearly benefits from the positive relationships they enjoy with their teachers. By Year 9, they are keen to take

initiatives as in project work requiring research and empathetic writing. They rise to the challenges set, taking pride in written work. Some Year 11 pupils, by contrast, seem more diffident. Working on their GCSE decision-making exercise, a mixed attainment group used a matrix to compare pros and cons of alternative energy sources, an approach which was sufficiently well supported by the teacher to ensure that all pupils made good progress. Some members of a second group, although they worked with equal enthusiasm and were engaged by the resource material, struggled to come to terms with, for example, the link between electric cars and the need to generate electricity to run them. They accepted the advantages of wind power without consideration of possible disadvantages and were more reluctant to think for themselves.

136. The quality of teaching overall is good. Pupils are effectively grouped according to their levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 and the tasks they are set are well matched to their needs. Pupils with special needs have subject- and module-specific targets. They make good progress because their learning needs are well understood. There is some very good teaching. A Year 8 class, for example, was immediately engaged by probing questions which reviewed earlier work on the decline of traditional industry in South Wales, revisited Japan and the 'multiplier effect' and led into a well structured and challenging exercise on the building of a new factory. The pace of the lesson never faltered. The textbook was a tool, not a prop. Map skills and photographic interpretation contributed to gains in skills as well as knowledge. However, it was the teacher's incisive and skilful contributions which punctuated the lesson, sustained pupil interest and had the greatest impact on learning because they promoted understanding so that the pupils were able to empathise with local communities and justify their thoughts. Subsequently, they would write a newspaper article and so get an opportunity to practise literacy skills. Another Year 8 group required to illustrate the decline in iron and steel production drew line graphs unaided and with accuracy, confirming that high teacher expectations were well judged. Here again, terminology was rehearsed and the opportunity to think laterally was grasped.
137. Similar attention to basic skills is also evident in Years 10 and 11. A potentially challenging group of lower attaining pupils in Year 11 was motivated by a well pitched introduction to 'When the pumps run dry' and was coaxed into understanding the issues by a 'round table' strategy which ensured that all members of the group contributed and were able to support each other whilst the teacher could constantly monitor individual progress. The teacher's infectious enthusiasm enlivened by his anecdotal approach sustained their interest throughout, so that the group gained knowledge of ideas such as 'renewable' and 'sustainable', improved the skills of interpreting data and analysing written information and made very good progress.
138. Marking throughout is systematic and includes attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar, and assessment is enhanced by modular tests. Data relating to prior attainment is used in setting targets but the process is unrefined and limited to GCSE pupils, and there is some inconsistency in individual targets in relation to levels and grades.
139. The department has built on the previous report. Its work is well monitored. Although ICT is not widely used for presenting GCSE coursework except by lower attainers, all year groups now use computers and the Internet. Schemes of work now identify opportunities for pupils to generate their own enquiry sequences and the department, under new and effective leadership, has a clear sense of direction and a

productive team spirit. Planning recognizes the key areas for further development so as to raise standards. An enthusiastic newly qualified teacher is well supported. The number and range of class sets of text books in Years 10 and 11 is limited.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Most pupils have a positive attitude to the subject.
- Assessment of pupils' work in examination classes is thorough.
- There is good use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- The standards attained by pupils at GCSE.
- The standard attained by boys.
- The planning of lessons so that there is a range of activities suited to the attainment levels of all pupils in the class.
- The pace of teaching in some lessons.
- The assessment of the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 to ensure consistency across all classes.
- Provision for visits to places of historical interest.

140. GCSE results have been variable over the past four years. Recent results have shown a decline at the higher grades from matching the national average in 1999 to being well below average in 2001. In most years, however, results overall match or are better than the national average and almost all pupils entered achieve a pass grade. Girls' results are better than boys' and much better in some years. The majority of pupils do less well in history than in most of their other subjects, but this is not the case for the highest attaining pupils. Results for these pupils show a better than average performance in history than in most of their other subjects.
141. The standard attained by a majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 is average. Teachers' assessments indicate that girls' performance is better than boys'. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the themes and periods they have studied. They can give a clear account of historical events and understand the significance of some key historical personalities. They can use written and visual sources to glean information about the past. They are weaker at evaluating sources critically and in explaining how a source may be used to support different interpretations of the past. The standard of written work by gifted and talented pupils is good. They are able to make detailed notes from written sources and to use these to good effect in longer, written exercises. Many pupils, however, are uncertain of chronology and cannot easily locate the events they are studying within a secure time-frame.
142. The achievement of the majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and carefully structured tasks enable them to make good progress. The achievement of these pupils is good.
143. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average. Pupils' factual knowledge enables them to make straightforward connections between events and they understand that large-scale historical events have more than one cause. Their course work shows that they can use sources effectively to answer questions about the past. The

attainment of girls is generally higher than boys. The written work of boys is often short and their ideas not fully developed. This is depressing the overall standard of boys' attainment. Higher attaining pupils reach above average standards. The work of these pupils shows good understanding of the periods and themes they are studying and they are confident in using specialist terms correctly. The achievement of the majority of pupils aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. They are making satisfactory progress in acquiring sound subject knowledge and the skills of historical enquiry. Individual support by teachers for pupils with special educational needs enables these pupils to reach a satisfactory level of achievement.

144. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, and on occasion good. Lessons have clear aims and expectations of pupils are clearly stated. The great majority of pupils are interested in history and respond positively to the demands made of them in lessons. An imaginative approach to the study of the English Civil War with higher attaining pupils in Year 8 capitalised on their interest and enthusiasm. Good planning, with varied activities, provided pupils with good opportunities to explore the importance of motive in history and began to introduce them to the idea of the complexity of historical causation. The enthusiastic and positive attitude of pupils in this lesson made a significant contribution to the quality of learning which took place. Good teaching in a Year 7 lesson on the murder of Thomas Becket was well planned and purposeful and had clearly structured tasks which helped pupils to learn how to use sources and to make judgements about past events. Good time management and group control created a purposeful and productive atmosphere for learning. Well-defined tasks helped a pupil with special educational needs to make good progress.
145. Teaching which is only satisfactory has some weaknesses. The pace of some lessons is slow and the challenge made to gifted and talented pupils modest. These pupils do not always progress at a rate which matches their ability. Planning does not provide for a variety of tasks suited to the range of attainment in the classes. The organisation of group work sometimes interrupts the flow of the lesson and pupils who lose concentration are not always brought back to task quickly. In some lessons input by the teacher is over-long which also slows the pace of the lesson. Pupils are not always challenged to offer their own hypotheses in answer to the questions they raise.
146. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen is generally satisfactory. Lessons have clear aims and the majority of pupils work hard. Attention is paid to pupils' literacy skills as well as the development of their historical knowledge. The pace of some lessons, however, is slow and insufficient attention is paid in planning to meeting the needs of gifted and talented as well as lower attaining pupils. Discussions, especially those intended to round-up and reinforce learning, are often too short and teachers do not press pupils to give extended answers to the questions they raise. Good teaching in a Year 10 lesson on the Cold War helped pupils to gain a clear overview of a complicated topic. Good time management and clearly-stated aims helped pupils to make good progress in extending their knowledge of the period and in their capacity to identify relevant information in written sources.
147. Assessment of pupils' work in examination classes is thorough. Teachers make full and helpful comments on pupils' work and clearly indicate where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Revision classes and a more systematic approach in lessons to

examination preparation have been introduced to help pupils improve the standard of their work. Assessment of the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is less effective. Comment in some exercise books is too brief to provide clear guidance to pupils on how to improve.

148. Management of the department is satisfactory. Day-to-day organisation is efficient and provision meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The head of department has other major responsibilities in the school. These restrict the time available for the effective development of a number of important initiatives. There has been no improvement in the opportunities for pupils to visit sites of historical interest since the last inspection. The scheme of work for pupils aged eleven to fourteen needs further development to ensure that the national model adopted by the school more adequately meets the needs of all pupils. The departmental review needs to focus more clearly on raising attainment for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen. Several changes of temporary staff have added to the difficulty of implementing these developments. Resources are adequate, the provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and use of this technology is planned for at each stage. Accommodation in the specialist rooms is good and there is a good display of pupils' work in these rooms. Several classes taught by the third member of the department are in non-specialist rooms, which restricts the opportunity for display and makes it difficult to create a stimulating environment for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Specialist teachers' management of the subject.
- The quality of monitoring and assessing pupils' progress.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 11.

Areas for improvement

- Stable staff of permanent teachers.
- Better timetabling of Year 8 lessons.
- Formal monitoring of teaching.
- Quality of reports to parents.

149. When pupils arrive in the school in Year 7 their knowledge and skills in ICT are below those expected. By the end of the first term, assessments show that the majority of pupils are at, or working towards National Curriculum Level 3, which is below average. Teachers' assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated levels well below national averages. Boys' achievement was well below that of girls. However, unstable staffing, for a period of seven terms, has had a detrimental effect on standards. The standard of work seen during the inspection shows that the current Year 9 pupils are reaching an average standard and have therefore progressed well. This applies equally to pupils with special educational needs and those with particularly high aptitude for the subject.
150. There is good achievement through Years 10 and 11 where all pupils continue to develop their ICT knowledge and skills by a number of routes. The majority achieve level two key skills accreditation and the higher attainers work towards level 3. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average.

151. In Year 7, as in all years, pupils respond well to good teaching though their keyboard skills are limited and this has a negative impact on speed of working on tasks such as putting data into spreadsheets. Most pupils in the Year 7 class observed understood the insertion of formulae, with the higher attainers able to produce printouts showing the successful insertions. No Year 8 classes were available for observation because their lessons were in the other week of the two-week timetable. This is an unfortunate arrangement which inhibits pupils' learning because of long gaps between lessons. Year 9 pupils demonstrated proficiency in using Access; with guidance they successfully created a database which they then shared through the use of email, with a school in another area. Higher attaining pupils managed the creation and sending of attachments with little difficulty. Throughout the first three years pupils use the full range of hardware and software to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils consider the impact of ICT on society through discussion and presentation, for example using Power Point. Skills are further developed in subjects across the curriculum with good examples of ICT use in mathematics, music, modern foreign languages, and science where it is particularly effective in enhancing learning. However the number of data loggers is still too limited to support science requirements fully. Whilst some areas of the curriculum are stronger than others, all staff are enthusiastic participants.
152. The discrete and cross-curricular provision serve Years 10 and 11 equally well. Pupils in Year 11 working towards the level 2 accreditation demonstrate positive attitudes, relating well to other pupils and to permanent teaching staff. They have a good understanding of health and safety requirements when working in an information technology environment and make effective use of the range of generic software in order to research and present their findings in a final report. Higher attaining pupils require little guidance when creating or interrogating databases. They understand the usefulness of spreadsheets and regard computers as a tool with which to enhance their work in other subject areas. Whilst many pupils have computer facilities at home, those who do not show an equal confidence in producing their portfolios. All pupils are well supported and those with special educational needs progress well. More gifted pupils are identified within the department and challenged to a greater degree, often being used to support other pupils through demonstration.
153. The quality of teaching observed varied from poor to very good and this reflects the staffing turmoil that has affected the department over the last two years. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Very good teaching by experienced specialist teachers was observed, but temporary staff often struggle. Permanent staff know their pupils well and present the subject in an accessible, challenging way. They have high expectations that are evident in the quality of planning, clarity of objectives and overall approach to classroom management. The commitment, care and enthusiasm they project result in positive pupil response and produces good learning. Where the teaching observed was poor there was evident inexperience, lack of knowledge of the pupils and a lack of clear planning, so unsatisfactory progress was the result. Pupils were allowed to dictate the pace and in some instances produced little or no work during the lessons. Because the planning took no account of individual learning needs, attitudes were poor and behaviour in the lessons deteriorated.
154. Pupils have the opportunity to cover all aspects of the programmes of study during their first three years, including control and data logging. However, the data logging is affected by limited availability of equipment. These areas were weak at the time of

the last inspection but have improved. All pupils receive discrete ICT lessons: some in Years 10 and 11 also take GNVQ ICT and others access further provision through business studies GCSE. Cross-curricular provision is good.

155. The department has developed effective systems of monitoring and assessing pupils' performance that starts with the determining of overall capability of pupils in Year 7. Good use is made of both internal and external data in order to set appropriate targets. This is followed up by good monitoring of progress. Although the quality of information going to parents has been limited, the department is addressing this and the current Year 9 reports are to include National Curriculum levels.
156. The management of the subject is effective. The two permanent members of staff who have provided much needed continuity have a strong commitment to creating a successful and stimulating environment. They have persevered with this despite the unstable staffing situation that has affected the department over the past seven terms. The level of support they have given to both pupils and temporary staff has been extensive. The collegiate approach adopted has enabled the department to make progress despite the difficulties. Although standards have been affected the picture could have been worse. Development planning, whilst less detailed than would be expected in normal circumstances, is in place, as is a certain amount of informal monitoring of teaching. Resources are adequate and cross-curricular provision has been supported well through the use of a class set of laptop computers and a flexible approach to specialist room use. Progress since the last inspection, despite the staffing problems, has been good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Much of the teaching is good and pupils learn well as a result.
- Pupils are very well behaved and most of them have a positive attitude to learning a foreign language.
- Pupils of lower attainment and those with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress because of strong teaching.
- Management of the department is efficient and supportive.

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching lacks pace and fails to challenge higher-attaining pupils.
- The two-week timetable causes long gaps between lessons for many pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10.
- Pupils would benefit from a wider range of opportunities for broadening their experience of French and German language and culture.

157. In 2001 the number of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE French and German examinations was below the national average. Two-thirds of these, however, took the short course with a reduced content and all of them gained at least a grade G which represents good achievement for lower attaining pupils. Pupils taking the full course examination achieved above-average grades. Pupils of higher attainment did less well in German than in French. Girls did better than boys in both languages, and by a higher margin than nationally.

158. Work seen during the inspection, both in class and in pupils' books, shows that standards overall in French and German in Year 11 are below the national average. Pupils of average and lower attainment, however, are achieving to their potential and making good progress through firm teaching that caters well for their needs. Boys are achieving similar results to those of girls in speaking and listening because they listen well and are equally ready to respond in class. In writing, however, girls have greater attention to accuracy and a more secure grasp of grammar. Higher attaining pupils pronounce French and German well and are mostly confident in their use of past and future tenses. However, the strongest linguists are not all achieving to their capacity because teaching does not always challenge them enough. Such pupils would also benefit from opportunities to improve their use of French and German through exchanges and school visits to the country.
159. Pupils in Year 9, as well as those beginning French and German in Years 7 and 8, are reaching standards that are at least in line with those expected nationally. The large majority are achieving to their potential by virtue of strong teaching and positive attitudes. Higher attaining pupils speak in full sentences and have a confident grasp of the past tense in French. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 8 were all able to say which shop they had been into and what they bought there in confident well-pronounced French. Pupils studying German in Year 9 adapt sentences well to take account of the different order of words. As a result of very challenging teaching pupils with special educational needs are reaching unexpectedly high standards and are achieving very well. In lessons where teachers use the foreign language consistently, pupils understand French and German well and react immediately to instructions. In a number of cases, however, this does not happen enough and pupils' understanding of the language is not as well developed.
160. Teaching of French and German is satisfactory overall. Of the lessons seen, better than four out of ten were good or better and a similar number were satisfactory. A small number of lessons lack pace and challenge and teaching does not allow pupils to learn enough. At its best teaching is very good and gives pupils the opportunity they need to practise new language in a secure and orderly context. This was true, for example, of a Year 7 French lesson where thorough well-planned teaching, using French appropriately and getting pupils to practise copiously through the medium of colourful visuals, enabled lower attaining pupils, most of them with special educational needs, to tell the time confidently in French.
161. Teachers are competent speakers of French or German and in some cases use the language for most of the lesson so that pupils have plenty of exposure to it. When this happens pupils learn better and have good understanding, such as in a well-taught Year 11 German lesson where pupils made swift progress in learning how to conduct a telephone conversation in German as a result of the teacher's persistent use of the language. Most lessons start in a brisk orderly way with a clear statement of what pupils will be learning. In many lessons, too, teachers set a fast challenging pace which involves everyone and leaves no room for inattention. Very firm but friendly management of pupils' behaviour ensures, in most cases, that they learn in a calm environment and concentrate well throughout the 60 minute lesson. The department's policy of sitting boys and girls together in lessons contributes further to a good ethos for learning. Teachers have a wide and engaging repertoire of methods and materials for capturing pupils' attention. Pair-work and competitions, for example, are used skilfully to encourage pupils to reinforce what they have learnt.

Teachers use the overhead projector to very engaging effect. Pupils benefit from the good teaching of dictionary skills and the regular opportunities they are given to reinforce their ICT competence through French and German lessons in the computer rooms.

162. In a few important respects the quality of teaching could be improved. In some lessons teachers do not use the foreign language enough in the classroom or insist that pupils themselves use it to ask for things routinely or apologise for being late. Then pupils learn less because they hear and actively use too little of the language. Teachers' explanations are sometimes too lengthy and lessons lack pace and vigour. Higher-attaining pupils are not always stretched enough, for example by taking away cues and prompts earlier so that they can commit language to memory, or by giving them more open-ended written work so that those who finish quickly can be kept busy. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and with encouraging comments, but they are not rigorous enough in insisting on pupils doing their own corrections and giving them ideas for improving their work.
163. Pupils respond positively to engaging and well-managed teaching. They listen attentively, answer questions eagerly, concentrate well and, when given the opportunity in such activities as pair-work, they co-operate with each other and work independently without losing focus. Pupils have a respectful relationship with their teachers, responding in kind to the polite professional way in which they are treated. Behaviour overall is very good, even in the case of lower attaining pupils in Year 9 who, by virtue of firm but good humoured teaching, are kept busily involved.
164. The two-week timetable, while giving a fair allocation of time to both languages, causes very long gaps between some lessons that are not evenly distributed throughout the fortnight. For example, the majority of pupils in Year 10 receive four French or German lessons in one week and only one in the next. In such cases some pupils have difficulty remembering what they have learnt and need to have longer spent on reminding them of what they were taught. Although two-thirds of pupils in Years 8 and 9 are studying both French and German, there are no pupils continuing with two languages to GCSE. Also, the number of pupils who choose to learn a language after GCSE is very small. The department is giving active thought to how it can attract keen linguists to continue learning both languages. Beyond the timetable there is considerable scope for offering pupils more opportunities to experience the languages and culture of France and Germany through exchanges, visits and e-mail links. The department makes the most of its accommodation with some very attractive displays of pupils' work, but its rooms are not grouped together and as a result teachers cannot share ideas and pool their resources as often as they would like.
165. Management of the modern foreign languages department is efficient and supportive. The school's aims are well reflected in the high standards of behaviour and response expected by its staff. Documentation is thorough and procedures for assessing pupils' work and recording their results are effective. A recent subject review gave the department an important focus on sharing expertise and good practice among the staff. In order to ensure that this happens there is scope for more regular and systematic observation of teaching.
166. Many of the reservations expressed in the previous report have now been put right, in particular the observations that pupils did not appear to enjoy learning a language and that there was too little support for lower attaining pupils. Most notably, the

quality of teaching and learning has improved. However, a few aspects of teaching mentioned in the report, for example lessons that are too slow-paced and dominated by the teacher, and the lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils, still remain to be addressed. Given the high standards of its staff and the positive attitudes of most pupils, the department is well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and rising at all levels in the school.
- Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 9, and very good at GCSE level.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good and pupils feel justly proud of them.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some teaching lacks sufficient pace and challenge.
- More computers are needed to raise standards of composition further.
- The very thorough assessment strategy does not incorporate levels of attainment.

167. Teachers' assessments for 2001 showed that attainment at the end of Year 9 was above average, with 70 per cent of pupils achieving National Curriculum level 5 or above. Girls' attainment was better than boys' but by no more than nationally. In the GCSE examination in 2001, 11 of the 18 pupils taking the examination achieved grades A* to C and all pupils achieved a grade. On average pupils did better in music than in all but one other subject in the school. Too few pupils took the examination to make comparisons with national figures reliable or to compare boys' and girls' attainment realistically. Standards in Year 9 and at GCSE over the past few years have shown a rising trend.
168. Standards as seen during the inspection by the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement, because pupils come to the school with a very mixed experience of music. Pupils in Year 9 are very conscious of sound in their compositions and arrangements on mood music. Using pitched and unpitched percussion instruments and the variety of sounds offered by the keyboards they compose using twentieth century techniques. For example, a bitonal version of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* exploited pitch, timbre and volume very effectively, creating a piece of unworldly quality. Pupils' knowledge of music and their listening skills are good and they use musical terminology confidently in class and in their group work when discussing how to proceed.
169. There is a wide range of standards in Year 11, but they are above average overall. This represents good achievement from their starting point in Year 10, and is a testament to the determination and dedication of their teacher, and to the growing maturity of the pupils. In a taped performance, phrasing and articulation were well done with generally good tone. Compositions show a wide range of standards, but many students in the large group use computers competently, enabling them to reach a level of sophistication that would be difficult otherwise. They make very good use of the five computers within the department but as numbers of pupils opting to study music are growing steadily, more will be needed to support their composition work. Standards in Year 10 are also above average and a significant

number of pupils are well above average. In a lesson on African drumming, for example, all pupils quickly achieved a rhythmic performance using several strands of different metres, listening carefully to each other. They then composed their own rhythms and built these into a small group performance. Sound was also exploited well as they used their own made percussion instruments.

170. Teaching and learning are good overall, good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are acquiring good skills, knowledge and understanding in part because teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. Teachers also find interesting and stimulating ways of imparting this knowledge to their pupils. They are very good practitioners and as such provide good role models for their pupils. They plan their lessons meticulously to lead pupils to make good connections between theory and practice and to focus gradually on to greater detail. In a very well paced Year 9 lesson for example, pupils were led to focus onto more detailed areas of film music. Particular questions were directed at different pupils, to challenge all in the class. This is a strong feature of most lessons, and ensures that pupils of differing attainment can achieve well, including the highest attainers and those with special educational needs. Activities are also chosen with particular pupils in mind and groups are put together in order to support and challenge each one. In one Year 7 lesson, however, the highest attainers were insufficiently challenged with questions about the orchestra in a listening exercise. Here, as in another lesson, pace flagged a little and pupils did not learn as quickly as they could. Pupils are assessed well at all levels. Workbooks are marked well. Pupils know what they are to achieve in each unit and they help to set their own targets for each of these. The grades for performance and composition tasks are also written into their books with an additional comment to help focus pupils on how to improve. The whole assessment procedure is very thorough but does not incorporate National Curriculum levels. Homework is set appropriately at all stages.
171. Pupils behave very well in most lessons. They are managed very well in the majority of lessons and are treated with respect and dignity. Very good attitudes towards the subject also enable them to make good progress. They develop good relationships within groups, working well on activities which involve a very good range of music. They do so, unsupported by the teacher for much of the time, as other groups are monitored. Very good attitudes are also seen in the range of instrumental lessons and in the bands, orchestra, groups and choirs. The Jazz Band is very good and is particularly popular. Pupils and students are proud to belong to all of these and enjoy a rich variety of opportunities to perform in and out of school, and even to work with professional musicians. Cultural and social provision are therefore very good.
172. Since the last inspection, improvement in the department has been good. This is due to the sustained and energetic leadership and management of the head of department and her determination to improve standards continually at every level of teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall standards of teaching are good and a significant proportion is very good.
- Standards of attainment in practical work in Years 10 and 11 are good and often very good.
- Attitudes of pupils towards physical education are very good. They are enthusiastic and well motivated to work hard and make good progress.
- There is a very good extra-curricular programme which is well supported by pupils.
- There is a clear vision and a strategy for the further development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The current timetables for pupils, staff and modules of work do not allow for effective continuity of learning.

173. In the last two years all pupils entered for the GCSE examination have been successful. The average points score per pupil has been close to the national average. The percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades has been below the national average. Many more boys than girls have entered for the examinations but there is no significant difference between their attainments. Teachers' assessments made against national criteria at the end of Year 9 showed that, in 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected standards was in line with national averages. There was little difference between the standards of girls and boys. In the last year many teams and individuals have represented the school in district, county and regional competitions in a range of sports. One or two individuals have been successful at national level.
174. Overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages although a significant proportion of work is of a higher standard. Boys in Year 9 play badminton at a good standard. They have a good knowledge of the game and a wide repertoire of shots, which they employ effectively in games. The standard of individual and team play in basketball of boys in Year 7 is good; pupils have a good grasp of basic skills.
175. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 in practical work are good, often very good. Pupils following the short GCSE course play basketball to a high standard. They have good grasp of skills and tactics and can maintain their skills in pressurised situations. Year 11 girls play netball to a high standard and they have good stick skills in hockey. Year 11 boys demonstrate a wide range of well-developed soccer skills in high pressure small game situations. A few boys have exceptional individual and team skills in soccer. Overall standards of academic work of GCSE students are average and do not match levels of attainment in practical work.
176. Boys and girls make good progress and both achieve well. Pupils with special needs have good levels of achievement in practical work, where their attainments are in line with national averages. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress. At the end of both Year 9 and 11 a few pupils have reached national standards in some activities.
177. The quality of teaching is always good and often very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are very well planned and organised so that they make a brisk start and objectives are clearly set out. Pupils know that teachers have high expectations

of them in effort and behaviour and they respond positively. New skills are carefully explained and supported by good demonstrations, for example in basketball, badminton and hockey. Lessons are well sequenced and progressive and content closely matches the skill levels and knowledge of pupils. All pupils actively engage in lessons and are able to make progress in their set tasks, albeit to different levels. Careful attention is paid to pairings and groupings so that all pupils can compete at their own level, experience success and maintain motivation. Good learning is assisted by the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and the high level of respect which teachers show pupils. Feedback is always positive so that pupils feel valued and they enjoy the recognition given to them for good work or effort. Lessons are well paced; lessons involving skill practices for higher attaining students proceed at a very demanding pace. Questions and discussion are important components of all lessons. Teachers make good use of practical situations to introduce or reinforce learning on health, fitness and anatomy. Teachers make good use of questioning to check on knowledge and understanding and to challenge students to improve the depth of their responses. Pupils are continually challenged to evaluate their performances and consider how they might improve.

178. Attitudes of pupils are very positive. They enjoy the subject and arrive at lessons prepared to listen and work hard. In practical and theory lessons pupils are confident to ask and answer questions and to join in discussion. They work purposefully, individually, in pairs and in groups with minimum supervision. They organise and play small games with proper regard for the rules and the aims of the lesson. Behaviour is very good and relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent.
179. The curriculum in all years is broad and meets National Curriculum requirements. At present, continuity of learning suffers because some modules of work are run in parallel, there is a lack of balance in the two week timetable and there is insufficient match between teachers' and pupils' timetables. The school is planning to improve the position in September. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to engage in a wide programme of extra-curricular activities. Almost every lunchtime and evening pupils are engaged in a range of events. The head of department has been only recently appointed but he has a clear vision for the future and has placed a well thought-out development plan before the senior management team. The head of department is supported by a very hard-working team of enthusiastic, well-qualified and experienced teachers. The department has maintained the good standards reported at the last inspection and has improved the standard of teaching.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Improved provision for pupils aged 14 to 16 which meets requirements and enables all pupils to gain a qualification.
- Very good examination results at GCSE in 2001.
- The opportunities presented in lessons for pupils to develop their own beliefs and values.
- The contribution made to pupils' spiritual and moral development and awareness of cultural and religious diversity.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys.
- The pace of some lessons for pupils aged 11 to 14.
- The development and monitoring of assessment procedures.
- The quality of marking to ensure that pupils have clear guidance on how to improve.
- The opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 to develop confident speaking skills.
- The provision of more structured support for the development of writing skills.

180. In most years pupils may opt to take either a short or full GCSE course. Results in the short course have been above the national average both at the higher grades and overall. Results in 2001 were particularly impressive at the higher grades with more than a third of pupils entered gaining grade A* or A. Though results at the higher grades in the full course in 2001 were below the national average, results overall were better than the national figure, with every pupil entered gaining a pass grade. Girls' performance is better than boys' in both examinations.
181. The standard attained by a majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 is average. They can describe key features of the religious traditions they are studying and can give examples of what is important to believers. They have a basic knowledge of some important festivals and celebrations and can usually correctly identify key aspects of belief, such as the Five Pillars of Islam. Girls do better than boys because they have better developed writing skills. Written responses by boys are often short and undeveloped and they do not effectively use the knowledge which their oral responses in lessons suggest they have. The standard reached by higher attaining pupils is above average. They have sound subject knowledge and good insight into the meaning of a range of religious beliefs and practices.
182. The standards reached by pupils on entry to the school are average and they have a varied prior knowledge of religious education. The achievement of a majority is satisfactory and the achievement of those with special educational needs is good. Good provision for these pupils and targeted attention to their needs enables them to make good progress. Their individual plans clearly identify learning targets in the subject and their progress is regularly reviewed.
183. The standard attained by a majority of pupils by the end of Year 11 is average. Most pupils are on target to gain a pass grade in the GCSE examination. They have a sound basic knowledge of the main features of the religions they are studying and can give accurate factual answers to questions related to religious and moral issues.

They are weaker at explaining how the different features of a religion relate to each other and in connecting religious belief to moral conduct. Higher attaining pupils, however, have good insight into the implications of believers' views for their general lifestyle and moral conduct. They are confident in using specialist terminology and the standard attained by these pupils is above average. The achievement of a majority of pupils is satisfactory and there is evident progress in the range and quality of the written work of most of them. Relatively less well-developed written skills, however, depresses the attainment of many boys and the standard reached by most girls is higher than that attained by boys. Individual support given by teachers to pupils with special educational needs and very carefully planned approaches to study are effectively preparing these pupils for examination success. The achievement of these pupils is good.

184. The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and occasionally it is good. Lessons are carefully planned to help pupils learn about a range of religious practices and good opportunities are provided for them to make their own response to questions of belief. For example, pupils in Year 8 were encouraged to give their own views about belief in God. Their responses clearly showed that they were interested in the question, but insufficient guidance on how to structure their writing prevented many pupils from exploring their ideas at length. The pace of some lessons is slow and over-long introductions by the teacher reduces pupils' work rate. Pupils' written work shows that teachers plan for a good variety of activities including different kinds of writing and presentation. Pupils respond well to these opportunities and the extent and quality of some of their work, for example research into the religious life of their local community, shows that most of them have a positive attitude towards the subject. Good teaching in a Year 7 lesson on religious leaders encouraged pupils to work in pairs to plan a presentation of their findings. Good group management, clear instructions and careful planning for the next lesson ensured that pupils worked diligently and remained concentrated on their work throughout the lesson.
185. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. Lessons are well planned and clear aims help pupils to concentrate effectively on the tasks set. Behaviour in lessons is good and the positive attitude of most pupils helps to make learning effective. Teachers use methods such as group work and group planning to help pupils understand significant features of religious practice and ethical teaching. Good teaching in a Year 11 lesson on Islam challenged pupils to relate Muslim practice to key features of belief. Most could do this confidently and well planned group exercises helped them to reinforce and extend learning. On occasion, even in lessons which are generally good, teachers miss opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills and are too often satisfied with brief and undeveloped answers to questions.
186. Good procedures are being developed for the assessment of pupils' work and use is made of target setting and pupil self-review. This still requires development and not all pupils' self-review records are monitored to ensure that targets are recorded or focus on the main points for development. Marking of written work is done regularly and helpful comment made. Some of this is too brief to give pupils clear information about how to improve.
187. Visits to places of worship enhance pupils' classroom experience. Provision meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and very good planning of the scheme of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 ensures that they learn from as well as

about religion. The range of religious traditions studied and the moral and ethical issues addressed in lessons means that the subject is making a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development and to raising their awareness of cultural diversity.

188. Management of the subject is good. Good planning, clear and relevant targets for development and efficient organisation give a sense of purpose to the department. Success at examination level and the commitment of the two specialist teachers to their pupils and the subject mean that religious education has a positive profile in the school.
189. Improvements have been made since the last inspection in the provision for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The range of visits to places of worship has also been improved.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 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	4	100	64	0	15	2.3	1.5
Chemistry	2	50	43	0	5	0.5	0.8
Music	2	100	84	0	29	1.5	2.4
German	1	100	82	0	13	1.0	1.9

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	100	87	30	43	6.0	5.8
Chemistry	5	100	90	40	43	6.8	5.9
Biology	12	92	88	25	34	4.3	5.3
Physics	3	100	88	67	40	7.3	5.7
Design and technology	6	100	91	0	30	4.3	5.4
Economics	17	100	89	24	36	6.1	5.5
Computer Studies	1	100	86	0	23	6.0	4.2
Sports Studies	5	80	92	20	25	3.6	5.1
Art and design	7	100	96	71	46	7.7	6.6
Music	4	100	93	25	35	5.5	5.7
Geography	17	100	92	29	38	5.3	5.7
History	10	70	88	0	35	2.6	5.5
English language	11	100	91	18	30	5.6	5.3
English literature	10	90	95	70	37	7.2	5.9
French	1	100	89	100	38	10.0	5.6
German	2	100	91	100	40	9.0	5.8

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining distinction		% gaining merit		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	14	29	n/a	50	n/a	11.6	10.5

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

190. The focus was on mathematics and biology but physics and chemistry were sampled. In physics the A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average and have been so consistently since 1997. The majority of students gain a grade A or B; pupils make good progress in the sixth form. In the first year of the new AS course a small number of students studied physics and a comparison with the national average is unreliable. Students gained a range of grades including A grades. One lesson was seen, in which teaching was satisfactory, but did not offer students enough opportunities for independent learning and their ideas from their GCSE course were not reviewed thoroughly enough. In this lesson progress was satisfactory.
191. A level chemistry results in 2001 were well above average and they have been so consistently in recent years. Students gain the grades predicted using their GCSE grades and they make good progress in the sixth form. Five students completed the AS course gaining a range of grades including A grades. A number of students began the course but decided to continue with other AS subjects at an early stage. One lesson was seen, in which teaching was good and students made good progress in their coursework. They work hard and with determination and they show a good degree of initiative. They receive very good support from their teacher.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- There is a high success rate at A-level and AS-level with a high student retention rate.
- A-level mathematics is well-organised, offering a good choice of options to students.
- Students' attitudes are positive.

Areas for improvement

- Only A-level and AS-level mathematics courses are offered.

192. Students have a choice of two courses in A-level and AS-level mathematics, either pure with statistics or pure with mechanics. However, there is no provision for courses other than A-level or AS-level; there are no GSCE repeat classes and students can only improve their numeracy skills by joining the TOPS course, which runs independently of the mathematics department.
193. Results in A-level mathematics in 2001 were above average. In 2001 all 10 entrants gained at least a grade D. Over the previous few years examination results at A-level have been above average. Since standards on entry to the A-level course are broadly average every year these results represent good achievement. The achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar.
194. Very few students leave AS or A-level mathematics courses without some form of examination success. Some choose to leave the course having completed AS-level successfully in Year 12 whilst others, who find the level of work too challenging, make use of the flexibility of the modular structure and gain certification in, for

example, AS-level statistics. Some very high attaining students choose to take extra mathematics modules to gain AS-level in further mathematics but this arrangement does not form part of the timetable. The overall flexibility of the system is commendable.

187. Standards of work seen suggest that students are making good progress in all aspects of the subject although some work shows some technical weaknesses in algebra. Work is taken seriously; students work hard and standards of presentation are good.
188. All teaching seen during the inspection was good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. Good relationships between students and teachers are evident in lessons and this allows lessons to be delivered in an effective way. Students enjoy the subject and they try hard in class.
189. Much work is checked by students themselves and they are encouraged to seek help when they meet difficulties. Where marking of work is done by the teacher, the marking is informative and helpful.
190. Students have largely positive views of the subject. They speak highly of teachers and value the help they are given away from the classroom. They also appreciate the small sizes of the teaching groups, which allow teaching to be more effective. The textbooks used are of good quality.
191. Students are made aware of their progress by reports and by modular examination results. The setting of targets for A-level and AS-level students is informal and needs some development if it is to involve students effectively in their own learning. The department is well managed.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Very good relationships.
- High quality course planning.
- Use of ICT.
- The behaviour and commitment of the students.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the pace of some lessons.
- Ensuring that all students take practical work seriously.
- The achievement of some of the pupils following the AS course.

192. In the 2001 A-level examination the results obtained by the pupils were close to the national average though they were well above the national average in the previous four years. Students make good progress in the sixth form, usually gaining the A-level grades that are predicted using their GCSE scores. They are able to gain the highest grades and in some years girls do particularly well. In general, students do as well in biology as they do in the other subjects they study.

193. In 2000, 13 students began the AS-level course and after a short evaluation period some decided to continue with other subjects and eight completed the course in 2001, five of whom did not gain a pass grade though some are repeating module examinations and may gain a pass grade this year. Two students continued into Year 13, one with an A grade. In previous years almost all students have completed the courses that they started and no student left a course without some form of success.
194. The standard of work seen during lessons and in pupils' folders was good. Students in Year 12 have a detailed knowledge about blood, the cells in it and their functions. Most carry out practical tasks carefully; they take them seriously and have good practical skills. Understanding of ideas about the capacity of the lungs and of the ways of measuring it is good. Work about enzymes and digestion is of a very good standard. In Year 13, students achieve a high standard in their work about genetics and evolution. Their understanding of ideas about the reasons why the numbers in a population of animals can change and their ability to work out patterns of inheritance in fruit flies is good and in some cases very good.
195. Teaching is good with many very good features. Relationships between students and teachers are particularly good and very good use is made of ICT. In a lesson about breeding fruit flies a computer simulation was used very effectively to enable the highest attaining students to make fast progress whilst allowing time for the teacher to provide more support to others. Expectations of students were high in this lesson. When measuring the capacity of the lungs a well-structured discussion allowed pupils to contribute their ideas about how it should be done, but using time targets would have moved the lesson on more quickly. In a lesson about population densities good use of discussion ensured that students made good progress in their understanding of difficult ideas. Good use is made of a variety of well planned teaching methods: reading research tasks are used, references to the Internet are given so that students have access to very up to date information and good use is made of examination questions to prepare students effectively for the module tests. Explanations are clear and teachers have a good knowledge of their subject so students make good progress in these lessons.
196. Students' behaviour is always very good and their attitude to their studies is almost always positive. They are interested in understanding explanations of the scientific principles they encounter, about genetics, for example, or the factors that affect how large a population of animals may be. At these times they are well-motivated and hardworking and show responsibility and independence. These features of their work are clearly related to good relationships with teachers, who provide regular support and encouragement through clear instructions and close attention to their understanding. In some cases students' work is poorly organised and not kept systematically in folders, which will make revision difficult. A small number of pupils do not take their practical work as seriously as they should.
197. The management of the course is good and progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The teaching programme is well planned with close attention to the syllabus and good use of questions from past papers so that students are well prepared for examinations. There is good teamwork amongst the teachers and a good variety of teaching activities is used, including a field trip to Aberystwyth. Students' work is marked regularly and they are provided with mark schemes for essays so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Targets are set and pupils know what is expected of them.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in business.

Overall, the provision for AVCE business is **good**.

Strengths

- Students' achievement.
- Students' attitudes.
- Assessment procedures for monitoring students' progress.
- Relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for development

- Sometimes teachers talk for too long and allow students too little independence.
- Accommodation.

198. Students enter the subject having attained, in most cases, the entry requirements laid down by the school. However, the department does exercise some discretion based on knowledge of the student's prior attainment. As a result attainment on entry to the course is broadly average. As this is a new specification there are no previous results with which to compare performance. However the school has, for a number of years, entered students for General National Vocational Qualifications at advanced level in business. Results compared very favourably with those achieved nationally. Completion rates have been very high and numbers achieving distinctions and merits have exceeded national norms. Students in the current Year 13 took course examinations at the end of their first year. Results were below those predicted by the school. Availability of information from the examination board and a shortage of permanent teachers appear to have had a negative impact on the levels achieved. Standards at present are average and progress overall is good.
199. Evidence from the lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work shows a good level of understanding of key business concepts. Year 13 students were able to speak knowledgeably on aspects of business planning, having gone through a process of preparing to set up a business. Business plans have been prepared to meet the requirements of potential investors and students presented their plans to bank personnel. The students understand the importance of location and have sound levels of knowledge in terms of marketing strategies. Some students were less sure about aspects of finance and although they had prepared financial statements, including cash flow forecasts, they were unable to articulate clearly of what benefit the exercise had been. Higher attaining students demonstrate greater confidence when pressed on the usefulness of breakeven analysis. Year 12 students introduced to macro economic theory were developing a sound understanding of the circular flow of income and were able to describe the impact of factors such as a rise in interest rates. Although they were faced with a complex diagram illustrating features influencing economic performance most could provide valid explanations of the diagram.
200. The quality of teaching on the programme is satisfactory and some is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work to their strengths, taking responsibility for the different units that make up the specification. They work with an enthusiasm that influences students' commitment and improves the effectiveness of learning. Students feel that they are well supported by the current staff but

recognise that as with other areas in the department they have been affected by staffing difficulties. However they are appreciative of the efforts made by the permanent staff to give them the best possible opportunity to succeed. On occasions the enthusiasm of teachers results in too little responsibility being placed with the students for their own learning. Students are prepared to listen to teachers and their attitudes are positive but where the teacher's input is too long concentration does decline. Teachers make every effort to inform students of their progress and have very good assessment systems in place for monitoring and recording performance. The information they gather is used effectively to ensure the best possible progress and where standards slip teachers are quick to take action, involving parents where appropriate. Individual targets help to motivate students. Work is accurately assessed in line with the examination requirements, with teachers making good use of the grading guidance provided in the specification.

201. The co-ordination and management of the subject are good. An experienced teacher who ensures that standards are maintained through good internal moderation procedures leads the teaching team. Retention rates are good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory: there is no base room and lessons take place in a variety of non-specialist accommodation.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

202. Physical education was sampled. One lesson was observed. Only a small number of students have been attracted by the A-level course in recent years. In the last three years students' average points scores have been below the national average. In 2001, seven students were entered for the AS examination and four were successful. Only two students are studying A-level this year. Their academic work is of an average standard. The standard of practical work sampled at AS and A-level was very good. The quality of academic teaching is good. Teaching of practical subjects, by teachers who are enthusiastic and have a very strong command of their subject, is very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

203. Art and music were sampled; two lessons were observed. Two art lessons were observed and teaching and learning in both were good. Students' individual styles are based on observational drawing, good technical skills and improving personal views of famous artists and their work. All of the students who began art courses in the sixth form are continuing their studies. Students did better than expected in 2001, with every student gaining an A-level GCE pass at grades A to C, with three quarters gaining grades A or B. Every student entered for the AS-level examination was successful. Standards in the sixth form are above average. Observational drawing continues to be central to the students' activities and there is a considerable leap in drawing skills from Year 11 to Year 12. Students make good connections between their work and the work of famous artists. Particularly good relationships exist between teachers and students. The teachers' pertinent questioning allows students to develop their technical skills, adopt new ideas and express personal opinions. Students' opinions lack the authority which could be gained by reading and research. Their opinions are almost exclusively concerned with the visual qualities of works of art without consideration of their purpose or spiritual quality.
204. Provision for music in the sixth form, which is studied at AS and A-level, is very good. Two lessons were observed. Between two and six students study the course

and almost all take the examination each year. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Most students taking the examination achieve a grade, although AS-level results were unexpectedly disappointing in 2001. Teachers know the students very well and support them over and beyond course-related matters. Students are consulted about option choices and these are relevant and attractive to them. Their progress is very well monitored by teachers. Students also take part in the good extra-curricular activities offered by the school.

HUMANITIES

205. The focus of the inspection was on geography. History and religious education were sampled. Standards in A-level history have varied over the last four years. In two of those years students did better than average. In the other two years results were below average. The standards attained in AS-level in 2001 were above average overall and in terms of the proportion of students gaining the highest grades. Teaching is good and very good academic guidance is given to students in Year 13. The take up of students on to the course is good and the proportion finishing is satisfactory. Students make very good progress from AS to A2 in the development of independent study skills.
206. There is no strong tradition of entering students for religious studies A-level. At the most recent examination, though overall results were well below average, six of the eight students entered gained a pass in the grade A to E range and two of these passes were at the higher grades. Most of the students entered for the examination in recent years have been girls though there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Nine students, all girls, were entered for the AS-level examination in 2001. All gained a pass with A to D grades and two gained passes at the higher grades. Standards in the present A2 group are below average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The department has a clear sense of direction.
- Standards are improving.
- The teaching team is now stable and there is some good teaching.
- Students work well together in group situations in Year 12.
- Areas for improvement
- Standards of attainment.
- The achievement of boys.

207. Standards in geography in the sixth form are average. The twelve AS and two A2 students are well served by a progressive syllabus and are exposed to many opportunities for independent learning but include few higher attaining students, reflecting the relatively low hurdle the department imposes on entry to sixth form courses. A-level results in 2001 were slightly below national averages but girls, in particular, achieved well, gaining significantly better grades in geography than in the other subjects they were entered for. The performance of the boys was well below the average for schools in similar contexts and, whilst they all passed, their achievement, when compared to their performance in other subjects and at GCSE,

was unsatisfactory. Results have fluctuated in recent years; they were good in 1999 and very good in 1998. Four of the five students who embarked on the AS course in 2000 completed it. Three opted to continue the subject to A2 and two remain. There have been no candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds.

208. The current work of Year 13 students is average. Their progress is only satisfactory because of their reluctant response to what is generally good teaching. Typically, they lack the confidence to synthesize their growing knowledge of the subject so that their understanding of it, their ability to interrelate the various elements, to interpret information and so to extract what is relevant to answering specific questions is compromised.
209. Year 12 has a wider range of prior attainment but standards of current work are also average. The response of students is less diffident but progress varies because not all students have yet bridged the gap from GCSE. Independent work, for example, on the problems faced by remote rural communities generated projects in which some students had merely copied maps and extracts from the wealth of rich resource material provided without giving thought to the emerging patterns and the common strands. Well focussed teaching and students' interaction, especially in group situations, within the context of positive and productive student and teacher relationships and accessible staff are encouraging all students to be more analytical in their approach and are beginning to raise achievement.
210. Sixth form students, including the two members of Year 13, enjoy geography and a reasonable proportion intend to pursue the subject into higher education or to A2 level. They are reasonably well informed about their progress and understand how targets are set, contributing to them through a termly self-review. Their work is orderly and comprehensive. They stay on task and work at a reasonable pace. AS-level students willingly participate in question and answer sessions but A2 students make little contribution even when invited to do so.
211. Teaching is satisfactory. It is shared between two specialists whose subject knowledge is secure and whose specific interests are well harnessed. At the time of the inspection, the focus of teaching was on individual and group assignments. Students in Year 13 were preparing a research project on sustainable development including a case study of Nepal. The teacher had planned the introduction well. Clear objectives were shared with students and their progress was regularly assessed in whole-class sessions, which added structure, but the class needed constant encouragement and support from the teacher. Schemes of work are designed to convey knowledge and understanding through varied teaching strategies and student-based enquiry so that students' interest is sustained. Time is used well in terms of subject coverage and depth.
212. Student numbers and attainment as measured by the results of external examinations have declined since the previous inspection but, under new leadership and with no current staffing problems, the department is recovering. The two teachers responsible for sixth form teaching are enthusiastic and work closely together with shared aims and a clear sense of direction. A well resourced departmental library is maintained.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

213. The focus of the inspection was on English literature. English language and French were sampled. In 2001 eleven students were entered for English Language at A level. Results were slightly above the national average and two students attained the highest grades. The average points score was considerably higher than in the previous year. Performance by the first group of students to be entered for English Language at AS-level was disappointing. Eleven students were entered, none attained the highest grades, six attained middle to low grades and five were unclassified. There are currently only three students in Year 13 but the Year 12 group is very much larger with 20 students working towards the AS examination. Teaching and learning were good in the lesson seen. Students focused clearly on the task, discussed easily, and learned from each other. Students had a good understanding of spoken language.
214. Two students joined the French AS-level course in September 2001 and one subsequently dropped out. The remaining student has made satisfactory progress since GCSE and is reaching expected standards in speaking and writing, especially in the understanding of French grammar. Teaching in the lesson observed was sound and as a result the student made gains in acquiring new language on the topic of the environment.

English Literature

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

Strengths

- Overall, teaching is very good.
- Students achieve very well given their prior attainment.
- Students enjoy opportunities to express their ideas and challenge others.

Areas for improvement

- Results at AS-level.

215. Results in English Literature at A-level have been well above average in the last two years and much better than in 1999. Students achieve better in the subject than in others. The first group of students to take AS-level in 2001 were not as strong. Two students attained B grades and others C and D. All students passed.
216. Overall attainment is well above average by the end of Year 13. Students in Year 13 studying *Measure for Measure* showed very good understanding of the text. Working in small groups they were able to focus on characterisation, themes and imagery. In Year 12, students made perceptive responses in discussion about Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, demonstrating good oral skills and an improving understanding of the play. Given students' prior attainment their achievement over the course as a whole is very good. By the end of Year 13 they are able to write critically and in an appropriate style. They can develop and sustain their ideas in their essays and in discussion, drawing on the text for quotation to illustrate and support their points. Written work is well expressed, thoroughly planned and based on a good knowledge base. They use literary terminology well and make their own notes assiduously. Students read and respond to literature with interest and express their opinions well. Oral skills are generally good and in most lessons students participate well if rather quietly. They are more forthcoming and lively when working in pairs.

217. Students express very positive views about the subject. They enjoy lessons and say they particularly enjoy opportunities for discussion and argument. Most value opportunities to express their point of view but not all students are confident to participate in discussion. They recognise and appreciate the different styles of their teachers and understand the marking and grading schemes. They find the setting of targets very helpful. Students say they have to work very hard. Relationships in the classroom are very productive. Students in Year 13 said there were difficulties with coursework deadlines for AS work.
218. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have very strong knowledge of the subject and present it sensitively and with enthusiasm. Lessons have varied tasks and good pace. Students' thinking is extended because teachers have good and detailed knowledge which they use in careful questioning to draw themes together and focus students on the language and content of the text. Students learn well when they engage with the text in pairs or whole class discussion. Expectations are high. In the best lessons opportunities for students to express their own ideas, challenge others and present their conclusions to the class are good. Objectives for lessons are clear and are made explicit to students. Lessons are well prepared and some very effective strategies and resources are used. In a very good Year 13 lesson in preparation for the synoptic unit the teacher use a very good strategy to enable students to focus on imagery. Students then had to find poems linked by theme and devise questions for their peers. Relationships in the classroom are very good. Students are well prepared for examinations and work is generally very well marked with extensive comment and useful targets for improvement. Assessment is used well to set targets for students and to inform teachers' planning.
219. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Experienced subject specialists teach the A-level course. Departmental planning is thorough and well-prepared and structured materials support and guide students' work. The department has measures in hand to improve on AS performance and last year. Teachers work well together and monitor and evaluate students' performance carefully. Assessment arrangements are good and students are given very good advice and guidance about their work.
220. Performance in the A-level examination was poor at the last inspection. There has been much improvement and students now achieve grades which are well above average. Students now make very good progress.