

INSPECTION REPORT

Whitby High School

Whitby

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111429

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Temple

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain
07661

Dates of inspection: 15th - 18th April 2002

Inspection number: 189761

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11-18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Sycamore Drive
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Cheshire

Postcode: CH66 2NU

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr. Myles Hogg

Date of previous inspection: 11 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7661	Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector		The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well the school is led and managed? What the school should do to improve further? Equality of opportunity
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Citizenship
3943	Don Innes	Team inspector	English/drama	English as an additional language
6138	Keith Page	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18453	Colin Lower	Team inspector	Science	
27058	Kathleen Cannon	Team inspector	History	
30928	Pauline Eames	Team inspector	Geography	
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
21954	Terry Chipp	Team inspector	Art	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
22524	Sylvia Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology	Special educational needs
14446	Barry Simmons	Team inspector	Physical education	
12475	Stuart Johnson	Team inspector	Music	Assessment
4749	Martin Ash	Team inspector	Modern languages	
27503	Marie Foulds	Team inspector	Biology	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education, business	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism	Sixth form Co-ordinator

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is much bigger than other secondary schools (1596 students compared with the average size nationally of 983 students). The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals (8.7 per cent) is below the national average; The percentage of students speaking English as an additional language (0.9 per cent) is low. The number of students identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements, (12.3 per cent) is below the national average. Those with statements of special education needs amount to 1.3 per cent which, is below the national average. When students enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is about average, although higher in recent years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features. Leadership and management are very effective and standards in external examinations have improved as has the quality of teaching. Students' attitudes are very good and the school is financially secure. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Management and financial control are very good.
- GCSE results have improved considerably.
- The attitudes of the students are very good, as are relationships between students and between students and staff.
- The teaching is good.
- The provision for the students' social development is very good.
- The number and take up of extra-curricular activities are excellent.

What could be improved

- The provision for religious education particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Links with industry have declined.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not properly embedded in the schemes of work in subjects across the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection in 1996. The quality of teaching is higher. Performance management is now established and the role of the form tutor is more defined. GCSE results have also improved. There has been considerable progress in physical education, history and science. In religious education there has been limited improvement. However, standards in A Level mathematics have not improved. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are better. ICT has improved substantially in terms of resourcing and standards. There is some good use of ICT across the curriculum.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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	B	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	B	A	n/a	N/a

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

When students enter the school, their attainment is average overall. However, levels are rising and are higher for students in Years 7 and 8. In 2001, statutory test results at age 14 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. When compared with schools with a similar context (eligibility for free school meals), the school's performance was average, higher than published results would suggest. Students needing financial support are greater by Cheshire's benchmarks. At age 14 standards in work seen are above national expectations overall and students' achievements are good. In English and science, attainment is above average whereas in mathematics it is average. Boys perform better than girls at this level.

At age 16, the proportion of students gaining 5 A*-C grades in 2001 was above average. For those students gaining 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G grades, proportions were well above average. When compared to similar schools, results are average when taking into account severer levels of deprivation identified by Cheshire than published figures would suggest. Standards in work seen are above average overall and students' achievements are good.

The progress made by students with special educational needs is very good. Progress is good for students for whom English is an additional language. Gifted and talented students also make good progress. The school sets appropriate targets, taking into account the prior attainment of differing cohorts. Standards have improved sufficiently since the previous inspection.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are positive about school and are polite and hardworking. They are interested in their work and understand the impact of their actions on others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Students behave well both in and out of the classroom. They respect their teachers and each other.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students are mature and reflect upon their actions. They relate well to one another and to their teachers. They respect others' feelings, values and beliefs.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very good

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

TEACHING

Teaching and learning are good overall. In about a third of lessons in main school and in about three fifths of lessons in the sixth form teaching is very good or better. It is good or better in approximately four fifths of lessons in main school and nine tenths of lessons in the sixth form. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Learning mirrors teaching almost exactly. Students respond by being interested in their work and effectively completing their tasks. Their creative efforts are developed well in art and their physical efforts effectively extended in physical education. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well and have improved. Students with special educational needs are taught very well. Teachers have high expectations and these are particularly evident in art and physical education. Planning is good overall but best in modern foreign languages. Teachers manage students very effectively especially in religious education, geography, art, mathematics, English and physical education. Formative assessment procedures are weak in mathematics and this is reflected in students lacking awareness of what they need to do to improve. Homework is regularly given but inconsistently in music.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall. Extra curricular activities are excellent. Numeracy and literacy strategies are good. Links with industry have declined and need to be re-established.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good overall. There are not enough learning support assistants. There has been good progress towards meeting the recommendations of the new code of practice. The quality of individual education plans has improved.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Most students are very competent with English but when support is required, although limited, it is effective.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Social provision is a strength. There are many social activities where students can develop relationships, have opportunities to take responsibility and are enabled to work in the community. Moral topics are dealt with well in personal and social education. Citizenship is well developed. Cultural education is good but does not prepare students sufficiently for living in a multicultural society. Spiritual provision, although present in assemblies, is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Child protection procedures are very good. Good procedures are in place for health and safety, the monitoring of attendance and the monitoring of behaviour. Careers advice is good. Most departments have good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress. Collection of assessment data is well managed and enables effective monitoring of individual students' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The acting headteacher and her key staff are leading and managing the school very well. They have a shared commitment to improvement and, as far as is possible in the present transitory situation, have an ambitious vision for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well but need to ensure that statutory requirements are met for religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Examination results are analysed effectively. Performance management is well established and provides the main vehicle for good monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Governors do not appear to evaluate the school's, and in particular, the sixth form's value for money.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of resources is very good overall and in the sixth form. There are very effective systems of financial control and administration. The school is very good at applying principles of best value.

Accommodation is satisfactory. A building programme of refurbishment and the relocation of teaching bases has resulted in almost all teaching being done in subject suites of rooms. There is particularly good music accommodation. There are poor indoor facilities for physical education and no wheelchair access to upper floors. There is a good match of staff to the needs of the curriculum, though there are significantly more women on the staff than men. The number of learning support assistants is minimal. Resources are good in main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are making good progress at school • The teaching is good • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best • The school is helping their children become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work their children do at home • Information about how their children are getting on • The school working more closely with parents

Good. Overall parents' views of the school are positive. Criticisms on the quality of information are partially supported but inspectors believe homework is given regularly and appropriately. School links are satisfactory overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Whitby High School has an open access sixth form with 195 students. Numbers have fluctuated over previous years, according to the student numbers in Year 11. The school offers a good range of post 16 courses, including one and two year flexible programmes incorporating A and AS level GCE subjects, together with intermediate GNVQ and advanced level vocational courses. All courses are taught at the school but one or two students each year take a course at the local further education college and combine this with their studies at school. The sixth form is made up almost entirely of students who stay on from Year 11, approximately one third of the year group. All but two students are white and numbers of boys and girls vary year by year. There are five students with special educational needs, one of whom had a statement when in the main school.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good sixth form with several very good aspects. From average attainment on entry, standards in the 2001 A and AS level courses were above the national average and represented good achievement in comparison with students' GCSE results. The sixth form caters well for its students providing a range of academic and vocational courses to meet the needs of all students. However, the take up of courses by the lower attaining students in Year 11 is low and in 2002 only one intermediate level GNVQ course was taught, although others were offered. The low take up of these courses reflects traditional and cultural trends of many students who wish to leave school to go to work and the ready availability of apprenticeships in the local area. The quality of teaching is very good (60 per cent very good or better). Students learn very well and have very good relationships with their teachers. This, combined with the very positive attitudes of students, is the key to the success of the sixth form. The sixth form is well led and provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Students achieve well and attain standards above the national average
- Teaching is very good overall
- Students are very well supported and guided in their personal and academic development
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and students make a very positive contribution to school life.
- Students are well motivated, responsive and hard working

What could be improved

- Spiritual development, including more provision for religious studies as required by law
- Social and study accommodation with more information technology resources
- Clear links, through active line management, to the senior management of the school

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
English Literature	Very good. Examination results have consistently matched national averages. Students are confident in expressing personal opinions. Relationships are very good.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Attainment over previous years was below the national average and the attainment of present students is below average. Teaching is satisfactory and students' attitudes are good
Business Education (AVCE)	Very good. A level results in 2001 were above the national average and students' current work is above average. This is the result of very good teaching and learning.
Art and Design	Very good. Attainment is below the national average but achievement is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is very good particularly in the knowledge and management of students.
Biology	Very good. Results in 2001 were well above the national average. Teaching is very good and prepares students for their examinations very effectively.
Psychology	Very good. Attainment in work seen is well above the national average and students do better than expected considering their GCSE grades.
Leisure and Tourism Intermediate GNVQ	Very good. Results in previous years, with small numbers of students in advanced GNVQ were above the national average. The work of present students in intermediate GNVQ is at least in line with pass standards. Very good teaching supports the development of independent learning.
Information Technology	Good. Attainment is above average and teaching and learning are very good. Students have very good relationships with their teachers.
Physical Education	Very good. Since the introduction of A level courses three years ago the results have been consistently higher than national averages. Very good teaching enables highly motivated students to attain very well.

Most other sixth form courses were sampled. Teaching was very good overall and excellent in one history lesson when anti semitism and euthanasia were handled with much sensitivity.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive very good educational and personal guidance and support. Regular reviews of progress are made by all subject teachers and this information is fed back to students three times a year by the head and assistant head of the sixth form. The procedures for assessing students' attainment are very good and marking is helpful and informative. Students are very well informed about opportunities for higher education and given very good early guidance with their applications. The responsibilities that the school gives to the students significantly promote their self-esteem and confidence.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The head of sixth form and assistant head of sixth form work well together to provide a high level of care for students' personal well being. They are fully committed to the equal opportunities that are provided through the open access policy. The clear aims and values of the sixth form include a rigorous approach to monitoring students' progress and a strong focus on enrichment activities. There is no formal line management link to the school's senior management team and targets for the development of the sixth form are insufficiently supported by collaborative monitoring and evaluation. The sixth form is cost effective and the principles of best value are applied well.

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"> The amount and quality of individual help they are given especially in their applications for higher education. The wide choice of courses that are well matched to their interests. The very good relationships they have with their teachers. The encouragement and opportunities they are given to take responsibility and become part of the main school and local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students felt they could still be treated more like adults and their views acted upon (the main issue being their leaving date which was changed and this extended their time at school by two weeks) The availability of advice about routes after the sixth form other than that of higher education. The sixth form social accommodation. The common room is too small and becomes very congested at breaks and lunch times.

86 per cent of sixth form students (168 students) submitted questionnaire returns and over one third of the students in the sixth form were interviewed either formally or in their subject areas during the inspection. Students are overwhelmingly positive about the sixth form and their comments show loyalty and support. The inspection team agreed with the positive comments made by the majority of students.

The problems associated with their change of leaving date are recognised by the school. There is a plan for improved study facilities with more ICT resources for the sixth form. More advice could be made available for those students' not going into higher education.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Standards have improved considerably since the previous inspection. When students enter the school, their attainment is average overall. However, levels are rising and are higher for students in Years 7 and 8. In 2001, statutory test results at age 14 were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. When compared with schools of a similar context (eligibility for free school meals), the school's performance was average, higher than published results would suggest. Students needing financial support are found to be much higher (almost double) by Cheshire's benchmarks. The performance of girls is better than boys in English and about the same in mathematics and science. At this stage standards in work seen are above national expectations overall and students' achievements are good.

2. At age 16, the proportion of students gaining 5 A*-C grades in 2001 was above average. For those students gaining 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G grades, proportions were well above average. When compared to similar schools, results are average when taking into account severer levels of deprivation identified by Cheshire than published figures would suggest. Girls and boys gain similar results. Standards in work seen are above average. Overall students' achievements are good. The trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ point score per student for 1997 to 2001 was broadly in line with the national trend.

3. The progress made by students with special educational needs is very good, particularly when they are taught by specialists. Progress is good for students for whom English is an additional language and those students who are identified as gifted and talented also do well and make good progress. However, there is, as yet, no early entry to GCSE examinations.

4. In English, standards in work seen are above average by the ends of Years 9 and 11. Students listen carefully and speak clearly. They take pride in their written work. Achievement is good, particularly by those who enter school with poor literacy skills. Students improve consistently throughout their time in school. They are confident to express opinions, which they backup with evidence.

5. Students achieve good standards of literacy. Overall standards on entry to the school are above average but a significant minority of students arrives with poor literacy skills. This group makes very good progress because of the very good provision made by the schools' specialist teachers and the good support they receive from other teachers who understand their difficulties. The good practice for improving the literacy skills of all students identified in the previous report has been developed further and is also more consistently provided in all subjects. Strategies to raise standards have been successfully introduced because the school has responded positively to its own identified needs and to national developments in primary schools and, more recently, in the early years of secondary schools. The high priority the school gives to literacy is reflected in the policy documents of most subjects.

6. In Mathematics, the work seen during the inspection also indicated that a high proportion of students including those on catch up programmes were reaching national expectations. By Year 9 high attainers confidently work at level 6 (level 5 being average) and understand quadratic graphs, Pythagoras' Theorem, early trigonometry, formulae manipulation and simultaneous equations. Only one lesson was observed where standards of attainment fell below national expectations. This would indicate that the trend of more and

more students reaching national expectation and beyond by the end of Year 9 is likely to continue. However, the picture in Years 10 and 11 is more variable with more observations of students attaining below or potentially attaining below, GCSE grade C.

7. Standards in numeracy are high. Many of the least able are reaching national expectations by the end of Year 9 and the school's success at the higher levels is due to the students' numeric capabilities. Students of all abilities in Years 7,8 and 9 know their number facts. They convert decimals and fractions into percentages and back again, explain and use the addition and subtraction of all types of numbers with confidence and can apply their understanding of numeracy to calculating aspects of shape and interpreting diagrams and charts. The most able are confident to use difficult aspects of multiplication in the context of formulae. The only area for development is the need for the more frequent use of negative numbers.

8. Attainment in the work seen in science at both ages 14 and 16 is good. By the end of Year 9 students do better than expected considering their Key Stage 2 results and, by the end of Year 11, students do better than expected considering their test results at age 14. In Year 9 middle band students are able to name and describe the function of the parts of the reproductive organ in females. In Year 11 top banded students are able to understand how both the wavelength and frequency change for different types of electromagnetic radiation.

9. In Art, attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. This represents very good achievement from below average on entry. Good progress is evident in exploring and acquiring and using skills with a wide range of materials and techniques. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the average in the work seen and above national averages at GCSE. Students are consolidating skills and developing well considered individual approaches to their art work. Girls perform significantly better than boys overall.

10. Standards in geography are above average at both ages 14 and 16. Students of all abilities progress well. In Year 7 they develop good atlas skills and by Year 11 they can discuss global issues relating to energy. In history, standards of work are good overall and students make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of historical events. From a baseline of average or near average in Year 7, students make good progress. By Year 11, the students have a sound understanding of the development of Britain from Roman Times (Year 7) including the impact of the industrial revolution (Year 9) and issues relating to prisoners of war in World War 2 (Year 11). By the end of Year 11, the students' achievements are well above average.

11. In design and technology, standards in the work seen are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. Students reach similar standards in all aspects of the subject and have good practical skills. Students are confident when designing and making in graphics, textiles and food. Attainment in information technology is above average across the school. Students acquire basic skills in most aspects of ICT in the discrete courses in Years 7, 8 and 9. They develop sound basic skills in control and measurement in a range of subjects including technology and mathematics. Standards in the GCSE examination have improved since the last inspection. Standards in business studies and economics are high and students achieve well.

12. In work seen, standards in French and German are above average by the ends of Years 9 and 11 as a result of interesting and effective teaching. Students respond well and achieve their potential in both languages. Those learning Spanish in Years 8 and 9 also achieve well.

13. Students are achieving well in music where standards are above average. They perform confidently on keyboards and percussion instruments, showing good familiarity with musical notation. Instrumental students attain good standards and perform well in the thriving extra-curricular groups organised by the school.

14. Students arrive from their primary schools bringing with them a range of physical education experiences, with many below expected standards. Students make good progress and by the end of Year 9 most students are attaining at least at national expectations. This good progress is maintained and by the time they are 16, their overall level of attainment is better than that seen nationally. GCSE results are well above the national average.

15. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with national averages. Students have a sound basic knowledge of Christianity and Judaism. Students can use religious language effectively. They have an adequate grasp of how the two religions work in everyday life. Students are good at giving opinions but they need to be able to evaluate from more than one point of view.

Sixth form

16. Students attain standards which are above the national average in their examination courses overall. Standards have risen from those reported at the time of the last inspection. The attainment of boys has risen since 2000. In 2000, students entered for less than two GCE Advanced levels or AS equivalent averaged 3.3 points in comparison with a national average of 2.7. In 2000, the students entered for two or more GCE Advanced levels or AS equivalent averaged 20 points in comparison with a national average of 18.2. Students entered for advanced vocational qualifications in 2000 scored 10 points, just below the national average with female students attaining higher results than their male counterparts.

17. In 2001, standards attained in all subjects except media, mathematics and art were at least in line with national averages and above in the majority of subjects. However, students attained fewer higher grades than the national average except in English literature, French, general studies, history, psychology and physics.

18. The standard of work of present students is above the national average overall. Attainment is well above in psychology, physics, politics and biology. It is above in ICT, PE, drama, history, geography and business education. Work seen in English, leisure and tourism, chemistry, music, media studies, French, German and design and technology is average. In art and mathematics students' work is below average. The differences in results between subjects and the number of higher grades attained are due mainly to the different ability levels of students on entry to the courses. There is no significant difference between the overall attainment of boys and girls in the sixth form.

19. The overall attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is in line with the national average based on their GCSE points score. There is open access to the sixth form, so not all students attained highly in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. The majority of students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in their time in the sixth form. In 2001, students attained above their predicted scores based on GCSE points score compared to both Cheshire and national averages.

20. In 2001, 80 per cent of students who embarked on a sixth form course completed it either in Year 12 or Year 13. 68 per cent of students continued their studies to higher education (including those taking art foundation courses) and 7.5 per cent of students went into further education. Different methods of promoting key skills, numeracy, communications

and ICT have been tried with Year 12 students this year. Results were not available at the time of the inspection.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Students' attitudes to the school and to their learning are very good and make a positive contribution to the standards achieved. Discussions with students reveal they are happy and proud to be at the school and that they are determined to enjoy and benefit from their time at Whitby High. They speak very positively about their learning and their enjoyment of the wide range of extra curricular activities with which they become involved. A group of first year students displayed their commitment to learning by revealing enthusiastically how they looked forward to attending subject clubs where they could pursue their interest and extend their understanding. In the vast majority of lessons students are keen to learn, show enthusiasm for their studies, work conscientiously and show pride in their achievements.

22. Students' behaviour in lessons is good and contributes to an orderly environment which is conducive to learning. In the vast majority of lessons seen behaviour was at least good and in a significant number behaviour and attitudes were either very good or excellent. In a minority of lessons, often where expectations and challenge are too low and where behaviour management is less strong, small numbers of students easily lose concentration and disrupt learning with silly and childish behaviour. Around the school students behave well, show appropriate regard for the fabric of the building and for health and safety and interact with each other in a mature and friendly way. Exchanges between students and staff are courteous, civilised and often involve the positive use of humour. In discussions with inspectors students were happy to exchange views and opinions in a polite and mature way. Records show there are occasional incidents of bullying but students confirm these are rare and no examples of harassment or oppressive behaviour were seen during the inspection. The school is a safe and orderly environment in which students understand and respect the behaviour code. Year 7 students expressed support for the behaviour code and explained that the rules were there for a good reason. The reward systems are valued by all students but are a major incentive for younger students. The incidences of exclusions are low.

23. Relationships between students and all adults in the school are very good and a strength of the school. The positive rapport between most students and their tutors and teachers effectively establishes a level of trust which enables students to discuss problems and seek advice on both personal and academic issues. Relationships between students are good and contribute positively to learning. In many lessons there are good examples of students working harmoniously in pairs or small groups; they share equipment happily, listen to views attentively, support each other appropriately and show due respect for others' views and feelings. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. They form good relationships with adults and their classmates. As students progress through the school they gradually take more responsibility for planning and organising their own work and learning. Students enhance effectively their personal and social skills and their understanding of the world outside school by willingly accepting responsibilities for aspects of school life, through the Duke of Edinburgh programme, through representing the school, through work experience and through a good range of trips and residential visits. The new citizenship programme is planned to improve further students' understanding of society by encouraging more contact with the local community and the school is planning to give more opportunities for younger students to be responsible for aspects of school organisation and routines.

24. Overall attendance is good and above the national average whilst unauthorised absence is low and below the national average. Registers show that attendance in some forms, particularly in Years 10 and 11, falls below the national average and that there are a

few students with poor attendance records. The school works hard and flexibly with individual students to improve attendance and has achieved success with some school refusers. Punctuality to school is good and punctuality to lessons is not affected particularly by the significant distances students move around the site. The good levels of attendance and good punctuality have a positive effect on the standards achieved in the school.

Sixth Form

25. The vast majority of students show very positive attitudes to the sixth form and high levels of interest in their work and learning. In the consultation questionnaire students overwhelmingly indicated that they were enjoying the sixth form and their chosen courses and would not hesitate to recommend the school to others. In all sixth form lessons, whether AS level, advanced level or vocational courses, students engage enthusiastically in the tasks required and show a genuine desire to develop their understanding and knowledge. Students adapt well to the different demands of the sixth form and show positive and responsible attitudes to balancing course demands with social activities and main school events in their unprogrammed free time.

26. The significant number of students, who indicated on the questionnaire that the school did not treat them as adults and did not listen to their views were protesting about a particular incident relating to a late change in the leaving date for this year. They were quick to dispel the negative impression in discussions during the inspection.

27. Sixth form students enjoy very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. In many lessons there is evidence of students extending their work and research beyond that set by asking searching questions and initiating detailed discussion as they take more control of their own learning. All sixth form students give time to help with routines and student support in the main school and they enthusiastically accept the responsibility of running their own common room and organising events and activities but a significant number was unhappy at the range of enrichment activities available. Some good opportunities for students to enhance their personal and social skills are keenly accepted and the school plans to further enhance the preparation for the world of work and life after school through the development of more interaction with community and business organisations.

28. The recorded level of attendance in the sixth form is good, is a positive aid to learning and exemplifies the keenness and enthusiasm with which students view the school community and their studies.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. The quality of teaching is good overall and matches the quality of learning. Both have improved since the last inspection. In about a third of the lessons in the main school teaching is very good or better. It is good or better in approximately four fifths of lessons. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Students with special educational needs are taught very well.

30. Teachers in the school are a truly committed and highly dedicated group. They work as a cohesive body. Teamwork is strong. Each supports the other and they exercise sensitivity and feeling in their dealings with students. They enjoy teaching at the school and are enthusiastic about their work. Teaching styles range from a dominant, challenging approach, when teachers ask well thought-out and provocative questions to extend students' thinking, to gentle, supportive inter-reactions when students need to be cajoled sometimes beyond their perceived ability. As a result, students are productive, particularly in mathematics and information and communication technology where massive quantities of work are processed.

31. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand well how to use this to promote good learning. In history, for example, the teachers' knowledge is very good and is combined with good team work. This ensures a consistency of approach in all lessons. No time is wasted and maximum learning takes place. A good example of teachers' knowledge was seen in science, when an excellent exposition about complex genetic ideas was described simply but effectively. An excellent lesson on volleyball was taught by a teacher whose knowledge of the game was exceptional, being an international player. As a result students were highly motivated, enthusiastic and anxious to be involved. They were effective and independent workers and used their physical capacity well

32. Teachers manage classes well. In geography, religious education, art, mathematics, English, physical education and some other subjects, respect and very good teacher/student relationships contribute to very good behaviour management. Lessons are prepared in detail and facilitated very effectively. In a personal and social education lesson the teacher used a strong voice combined with a great deal of humour and created a positive, pleasant atmosphere. She used praise and encouragement generously and consequently good learning was evident. Students responded well, with any over familiarisation quickly checked.

33. Some teaching, although solid and traditional with good organisation and class control, lacks inspiration despite communicating good knowledge. This is a point for improvement and requires specific focus in order to enhance students' experience and bring about more effective learning

34. Teachers try to include an area of interest for all students. In a food lesson, for example, the boys were spurred on by analysing the food requirements of footballers. In this subject, students with special educational needs are helped to build their self-esteem, become confident and improve their practical skills. Much teaching is skill based and, in order to enhance learning, teachers give the students a degree of independence. In an art lesson (Year 11) the teacher gave a very good practical demonstration and explanation of techniques used in still life painting. He communicated very well and provided very good individual support with the purpose of moving pupils forward and focusing them on the task at hand.

35. Teachers have high expectations. In English, a teacher insisted upon students taking responsibility and making decisions when sustaining a role in a dramatic exercise. She ensured that a brisk pace of interactions was established. Expectations of behaviour were also high. In a lesson on place values in mathematics, excellent opportunities were offered to enable students to use high level thinking skills. Work was varied and well-suited to the needs of all the students in the class. The use of investigation promoted a sharing of thinking strategies. Low attaining groups are challenged well, as in a science lesson on solubility in Year 9 when individuals were set different endpoints. This enabled all students to feel part of the lesson and their different levels of attainment were cleverly disguised. On occasions high attainers could be challenged more. In music, for example, extension tasks were provided but students were reluctant to take these up and needed more encouragement to do so. At

present the school does not offer high attaining students early entry to GCSE examinations.

36. Resources are used effectively. Teachers ensure that lessons contain a variety of tasks and activities; they use computers, overhead projectors, tapes and worksheets to support these. In modern foreign languages teachers use a number of different media well and combine this use with individual, paired and group work.

37. Homework is given consistently and marked using helpful comments. However, homework is not given consistently in music. In mathematics, assessment procedures are quite advanced but insufficient useful marking occurs and students are unclear about what they need to do to improve.

38. The quality of teaching of students with SEN is very good. Teachers provide appropriately challenging work which raises the self esteem and confidence of students. The excellent relationships formed with teachers when students are taught in small groups leads to very good progress so that students are able to participate more fully in mainstream lessons. Setting enables students with particular strengths or difficulties to progress at their own rate and, when or where necessary, gain the support they need. Work in English and mathematics is similar to that taught in other lessons but modified to more closely meet the special needs of students. Specialist teachers are well qualified and use successful teaching methods to help students with specific learning difficulties.

39. There are very few students for whom English is an additional language and for whom extra support is required. However, where there is a need, teachers are sensitive to it and ensure that the student in question is given extra support.

Sixth form

40. Teaching is very good. In 92 per cent of the 50 lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good or better. In 60 per cent of lessons, teaching was very good and in 6 per cent of lessons, teaching was excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was good or better in all but one subject with particularly high proportions of very good teaching in psychology, biology, business, ICT, leisure and tourism and art and design. Teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection, especially in the amount of very good teaching.

41. The structure, pace and challenge of lessons are strong features of teaching in the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject expertise which they share effectively with their students, enabling wide gains in subject knowledge. In business, for example, teachers are able to relate the academic aspects of business issues to the more practical ones. Teachers of psychology are also very successful at relating theories to real life. Rigorous questioning in many subjects especially in biology, economics and politics promotes deeper understanding and takes students onto the next level. Excellent interventions in art extend students' knowledge and introduce more precise and descriptive vocabulary. Teachers of mathematics are very effective in their skill teaching but do not consistently develop students' thinking and reasoning skills.

42. Teachers plan very well and use resources effectively. In music, very good audio and visual clips are used to illustrate various musico-cinematic techniques. Presentations in art show very good progression of thought and exploration of ideas supported by references to appropriate artists. In many subjects, especially business, leisure and tourism and ICT, opportunities are planned to develop students' independent learning and research skills. In these areas students are highly motivated and achieve well. The school's web site provides

a valuable resource that students can access at any time and is particularly well used in ICT. There is a need for further development of independent learning skills in biology.

43. Teachers recognise students' individual learning needs and help them to focus on what they need to do to improve further. This positive rapport between staff and students adds to the effectiveness of lessons. In English literature, for example, the respect gained by the teacher has helped to establish a good working relationship with the students. In leisure and tourism students are given individual feedback orally and in writing each time they submit an assignment.

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

44. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout the age range. The school offers a wide range of subject and examination options and an excellent range of extra curricular activities. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9. The agreed syllabus for religious education has been implemented but the time allocated for the subject in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient and the subject does not meet the statutory requirements in these years. The time allocated to ICT in Years 7 to 9 is insufficient to include the teaching of control technology though all other aspects of the subject are delivered well through discrete ICT lessons.

45. The school has adopted good strategies to teach literacy. Students are taught to understand, use and spell correctly the words and expressions important to their work in each subject. In most subjects, students respond well to encouragement to contribute to discussions, giving reasons for their judgements and providing more than short answers to questions. In more subjects than is usual, they are encouraged to write at length and are advised on how to organise their material. Creative writing is developed not only in English but also in geography and history. Although most students write effectively, the work of some is flawed by weaknesses in spelling words in everyday use and missing full stops. The true quality of students' knowledge and understanding throughout the age and ability ranges is sometimes obscured by lack of clarity and precision in their expression.

46. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills is also good. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is developing well. The school, since 1997, has had an effective numeracy coordinator and literacy/numeracy project group representative of most departments. The group has a clearly defined role for developing numeracy and literacy across the curriculum. The numeracy coordinator, who is also a member of the mathematics department, has led several well received training sessions, including the recent national training materials, and produced several documents that clearly exemplify the progression of numeracy taught by the mathematics department. The acting and substantive numeracy officer has also attended meetings in other departments to support the development of numeracy across the curriculum. As a result, inspectors experienced very little difficulty in identifying a wide range of subjects where numeracy skills were being drawn to the attention of students and used in a manner consistent with school policy. Numeracy was observed in art, science, modern foreign languages, design technology, history, geography, music and information and communication technology. Some departments such as history and geography not only include the development of numeracy skills within their schemes of work but do so in a creative and imaginative way, for example using the "Bills of Mortality" in history to calculate percentages. The future development of numeracy across the curriculum and introduction of numeracy as a key skill in the sixth form are well staged and fully supported by appropriate school and LEA action plans.

47. The provision for extra curricular activities is excellent. Almost half the staff is involved in offering lunchtime and after school opportunities for students to extend or consolidate their classwork. There are study support sessions after school in French and German. Music and physical education each offers a wide range of activities for students to work together in choirs, orchestra and numerous team games. Regular residential workshops, field trips and visits to France and Germany further enhance students' learning. The school works hard to ensure both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities are available to all.

48. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The content of the course and the resources for it are good but there is insufficient time allocated to it in the earlier years. Careers and vocational education are very good. The school has a strong careers team and a well equipped careers room. The department has been presented with an award for achieving their standards in careers education. Good links have been established with the feeder schools and Year 6 students visit the school during the summer term to sample subjects. Links with further education institutions are good but links with industry have declined and need strengthening, extending beyond the immediate environment if necessary.

49. Curriculum issues raised at the last inspection have been successfully addressed apart from the continuing non statutory nature of religious education.

50. The school has identified its gifted and talented students and reviews the list annually. Extension work is provided for some of these students and the school participates in schemes like the Cheshire Science Programme, a course for able students. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported as the need arises. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Students make very good progress, particularly in lessons taught by specialist teachers. The SENCO has a very good awareness of how students learn and provides clear direction for colleagues. The headteacher and senior managers are supportive and provide opportunities to develop appropriate strategies to support students. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and those with statements of special needs, is below the national average. Students who are identified as having learning difficulties are appropriately placed on a special register which is carefully maintained. Its details are known to all teachers who are also involved in developing means of supporting students to meet their targets identified in independent education plans and in the review and monitoring of progress. Students are appropriately moved up or down the stages of the register based on the success they have in meeting their identified targets. Students have access to all the subjects of the national curriculum.

51. Overall the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspect of the school is good. Some aspects however are stronger than others. The provision for the spiritual is satisfactory. Some opportunities exist in assemblies for the students to be quiet and to reflect on things like citizenship and relationships. Often these reflections are also accompanied by a short prayer and this enables the students to be thoughtful and to consider issues which might easily pass them by in a busy school day. Some opportunities for contemplation and reflection also occur in several subject departments such as in history where the students are encouraged to consider issues surrounding the Second World War. In music too the students can experience the emotional power of music, particularly in listening to things like operatic excerpts. The work in the religious education department also has units of work which include considering and responding to many fundamental questions of life. The general respect and care which the teachers demonstrate towards the students is an important part of the spiritual provision. Overall however the provision for the spiritual could be much stronger and more could be done in the school to develop this aspect of school life in a more

systematic and organised way. Opportunities are often lost, such as in registration and form time to consider a range of issues that goes beyond the temporal and the material. More subject departments too could easily make a more concerted effort to lead the students into considering a whole range of issues such as change, transcendence, order and purpose, limitation and frustration, and beauty and sense of pattern.

52. Provision for moral development is good. The students are expected to behave well, respect others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The members of staff set good examples in this respect. Themes in assemblies often have a moral aspect to them and students are often praised for their good behaviour. The personal, social and health education programme has significant units of work which involve the study of a range of moral issues. These include bullying, drugs, alcohol and sex education. All students in the school also carry a House Card which clearly sets out the standards of behaviour expected in the school. These high expectations are encouraged from the early years as all Year 7, students receive a booklet which unambiguously sets out what the expected standards of behaviour are to be. The liaison work with primary schools also includes a setting out of what acceptable behaviour should be, should the students end up in the Whitby High School. Individual subject departments too contribute to this provision. The work in the religious education department includes a whole range of moral issues and work in design and technology covers topics such as responsible use of the things in our environment. Mathematics has a good strong policy on positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons and art equally has high behaviour expectations.

53. Provision for social development is very good. Many clubs and societies help the students to develop positive relationships. These include, for example, the many sport clubs, cheerleading, the art club, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the homework club. Positive relationships are also encouraged through residential trips and other trips both in the UK and abroad. The students are encouraged to take responsibility through the prefect system. Here students can be prefects not only in Years 11, 12 and 13 but also lower down in the school when the opportunities arise. The School Council is another way in which students can learn to take responsibility, as is the option to be a library monitor. Students can be involved in the school community and in the wider community in a range of other ways, such as in parents' evenings, open days, helping with the elderly, raising funds for charity, the Play Group and activities at Christmas. The personal, social, and health education programme also has significant units of work on social development. These include the family, setting up home and living in a community. These are but examples of the wider aspect of the teaching on citizenship which the school does. Others include the study of local bye-laws, government, banking, neighbourhood issues and budgeting. Individual subject departments too play an important role in this social provision, such as in the stress on good classroom relationships, collaborative work and team work.

54. Provision for cultural development is good. The school has clubs which include music and drama, such as the Concert Band and the Girls Choir. Students often visit places like the Science Museum; go on theatre trips; go to Chester Zoo and the Boat Museum. There are also field trips. Last year a drama group visited the school. The school has many contacts further a field, such as visits to France and Germany. Other school trips include visits to, and exchanges with, Eastern European countries as well as with Austria and Denmark. The personal, social, and health education programme encourages the students to think of themselves as belonging to a wider European community as some of its work includes the study of the rights and responsibilities of European membership. This multicultural aspect of the provision is significant in the school and many subject departments include it in their work. Music, for example, looks at Chinese, African, Reggae and North American forms of music and in art it is common to find African, Aboriginal and Greek themes in their work. Students from other countries often visit the school. They come from, for example, South

America, the Philippines and Iceland. The study of food and fabric from other cultures is done in design and technology, and physical education has an emphasis on the up and coming Commonwealth Games. Provision for the students to acknowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the multi-cultural nature of the UK itself however is not a significant aspect of school life. This needs more emphasis if the students are to be better equipped to face life outside the school.

Sixth Form.

55. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the sixth form are good. However, the curriculum offered does not meet statutory requirements in respect of religious education, which is not available to all students. There is a good breadth and balance to the sixth form curriculum giving students a choice of 22 AS and A levels, 4 AVCE's and a GNVQ in Leisure and Tourism. Other courses such as RSA Word Processing and General Studies are also offered. A programme of key skills is being developed. The school uses an element of flexibility, extending the timetable to accommodate additional lessons of English and psychology outside the normal school day. All courses are taught on the school site.

56. The curriculum's match to students needs is good overall. The broad range meets the needs of the large majority of students very well though in an open access sixth form few lower attaining students take up the opportunities on offer. The provision for the small number of students with special educational needs is good. The broad range of subject options and excellent extra curricular activities make for very good equality of access and opportunity for all students who choose to enter the sixth form. There is very good provision of enrichment activities including charity work, voluntary work and work experience. Careers and vocational education are very good in the sixth form. Students are able to book a careers interview at any time. There are good links with local industry and retail centres and close connections with neighbouring universities. Opportunities for foreign exchange visits and work experience in France and Germany are available to language students.

57. Overall the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Some aspects are stronger than others. Provision for the spiritual is unsatisfactory. The students have some opportunities to be quiet and reflect in the general house assemblies which they have each week but this does not extend to all the assemblies to which they go. The students are valued by the staff, who teach and lead them. This is an important contribution to their spiritual development. The lack of the input from religious education in their studies and the general lack of planning for this aspect of their development, however, means that a lot of opportunities are missed and so this is an area of their experience which needs significantly more attention. Provision for moral development is good. The students are expected to behave well, respect others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The staff themselves set good examples. As well as the general provision which comes through many of the subject areas, outside speakers come into the school to present topics of a moral nature. These include visits by magistrates. Provision for social development is very good. A significant part of this comes via the citizenship certificate. This encourages the students to play an active part in helping others. There are plenty of opportunities for them to take responsibility such as form representatives and prefects. They also take responsibility for their own common room and kitchen. Provision for cultural development is good, particularly through the enrichment programme. This involves such things as developing an awareness and understanding of the legal system and care in the community. It also includes developing their multicultural awareness. Consequently there are many contacts with other countries such as Brazil, Japan and Germany. This multicultural awareness however needs to have a much more significant focus on the multicultural nature of UK itself. This would enable the students to be better prepared for life outside of school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

58. The school's procedures for ensuring students' support and welfare are very good, consistently followed by all staff and have a positive impact on the progress students make. The teaching and support staff know students very well and have their well being uppermost in their minds at all times. Students' relationships with teachers and tutors are open and trusting. Students are happy, feel safe and secure and there is good evidence to show that the vast majority are enjoying and benefiting from the education provided at Whitby. There are two designated members of the senior management team responsible for child protection issues and good, clear associated procedures, which meet statutory requirements. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. As in the last inspection the house system continues to ensure a framework for supporting students' well being. The pastoral support team of form tutors, heads of house and heads of school quickly identifies any students experiencing difficulties and works effectively to agree and implement recovery programmes. The school meets very well the statutory requirements of provision for those students with a statement of special educational need.

59. There are clear procedures to ensure students' health and safety and the school is conscientious in ensuring that health risks are quickly eliminated and that the buildings and site are safe for students. Formal risk assessments are done in relation to the buildings, activities in the school and in relation to outings and visits. There are regular evacuation practices and appropriate records of independent fire prevention and electrical equipment inspections. First aid supplies are available around the site and first aiders hold up to date accreditation. The school has clear procedures relating to medicines on site and to the recording of accidents and incidents. In lessons observed during the inspection very good care was taken to ensure students' safety. Careful practice was observed in science, physical education and design and technology lessons. Staff and adults on site are vigilant in ensuring children follow safe procedures and practices. No accidents or injuries occurred during the inspection.

60. The school has good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting attendance. Registers are taken accurately at the start of morning and afternoon proceedings and returned to the offices in case of the need for evacuation. The pastoral team analyse and monitor attendance patterns by year group, by house, by gender, by form group and by individual student. Students experiencing difficulties are supported well by the school and by the Educational Welfare Service. Flexible programmes have had some success in encouraging students with poor attendance records to gradually come into school more frequently. The school works hard to encourage attendance by constantly encouraging students and parents, by discouraging holidays in term time and by the award of certificates for full or greatly improved attendance.

61. The school's procedures for monitoring and recording good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. Form tutors maintain comprehensive records for each student of all the merits and commendations achieved, of all the sanctions imposed and they receive any cause for concern notes issued by subject teachers. Pastoral staff monitor the information closely and effectively identify and implement intervention programmes for students experiencing difficulties. Intervention can involve a reporting scheme with agreed targets or can be a full behaviour improvement programme. Parents are appropriately involved in all behaviour issues. The database of information available on the use of rewards and sanctions enables senior staff to ensure that teachers are using the systems consistently. The low number of exclusions, the small number of students following behaviour improvement programmes and the generally orderly environment are all testament to the effectiveness of behaviour monitoring and promotion systems in the school.

62. The school effectively monitors personal development on an individual student basis through the pastoral support team. The behaviour records, together with details of student involvement in all aspects of school life, enable pastoral staff to identify students with problems. These students receive good levels of support and counselling to assist their development. The careers service does not offer individual tutorial sessions to all students and this can be divisive.

63. Students' personal and social skill development is supported well through aspects of the personal and social education programme, by taking responsibility for aspects of school life, through house activities, through outings and residential visits and through work experience. The acting headteacher is aware that support for students in Years 7 and 8 could be improved through the introduction of formal personal and social education lessons and by increasing involvement in the day to day running of the school. Equally it is planned to increase the opportunities for students of all ages to interact with the local community.

Assessment

64. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. Assessment information is well used to guide curricular planning and the procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are good. The school's assessment policy allows each department to define its own assessment structure and marking system. Procedures are good across all the departments with the exception of mathematics where the procedures are unsatisfactory. For reporting purposes assessment procedures are effectively co-ordinated, using "Assessment Manager" software, with a common system to ensure that statutory requirements are met. There is a good level of reporting with interim and final reports for each year group every year. The reports are well set out and clearly explained to parents. They give generally good information on the students' attainment across all subjects but are lacking in giving students pointers for improvement. Assessment data is analysed by both departments and whole school to identify trends and any differences such as by gender or ethnicity. This analysis is well used and influences curricular planning on both a whole group basis and on an individual basis for particular students. A good example of this is the special needs department where very effective use is made of assessment information to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and to identify their needs. There is effective monitoring of individual students' progress with all staff having good access to a wide range of data. The heads of house monitor performance and co-ordinate action in cases of concern.

65. The quality of assessment and monitoring of progress through IEPs is a significant factor in enhancing the progress of students with SEN. Intervention programmes to support literacy and numeracy are effective in enhancing students' progress in Years 7 to 9. Analysis of test scores and examination results shows that students make very good progress and often exceed predictions based on their attainment as assessed on entry. The SENCO makes very good use of assessment information to set targets and provide appropriate support for students.

Assessment in the sixth form

66. The procedures for assessment and monitoring of students' progress in the sixth form are very good. The effective assessment procedures used in the main school are continued in the sixth form and enhanced by more detailed individual monitoring and target setting. Data is analysed to identify trends and added value and is well used to inform discussion on planning the curriculum for individual students and courses.

Advice Support and Guidance

67. The vast majority of students are very happy with the advice and guidance that was given to help them decide on the courses they are following in the sixth form and are very complimentary about the support and help they are getting with any academic or personal difficulties from teachers and tutors. Regular tutorial sessions ensure that overall progress and development are discussed and problems tackled. Students are encouraged and supported well in developing independent learning skills. Students claim to be kept well aware of how well they are doing and to be guided well on what they need to do to improve.

68. Careers advice and guidance is rated very highly by those students intending to follow university courses. Students thinking of further vocational training or employment are less comfortable with the advice available but still rate the guidance as good. Appropriate information on careers and higher education courses is available for students to look at. However, there is limited use of external speakers, work experience is only available where it is an integral part of a vocational course, there is no formal personal and social education provision and there is limited interaction with the local and business community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. The vast majority of parents are very supportive and hold positive views of the school and its work. The links which exist with parents contribute positively to students' learning and development. The level of support and interest in the school and in their children's education is demonstrated by the large numbers of parents attending formal evenings and informal school functions. Responses to the inspection questionnaire and at the consultation meeting clearly show that parents are happy with the quality of teaching, the standards of behaviour and with their children's progress. They believe the school to be well led and managed, to have appropriately high expectations and they overwhelmingly agree that their children enjoy school and are being well helped to become mature and responsible adults. A few parents raised concerns about homework, not being kept well informed on progress and about the school not working closely with parents. Inspectors and the school accept that improvements could be made in two of these areas but believe homework practice is generally good.

70. The arrangements for keeping parents informed on progress are satisfactory overall and good for students with special educational needs and those experiencing difficulties. The school is always open to parents wanting more information and is quick to contact parents if there are concerns. The school's pastoral monitoring system ensures that parents are informed and involved quickly should any student be experiencing behaviour, attendance or academic learning difficulties. Transition arrangements for parents of Year 7 students are good. Routine communication on progress is through parent evenings and the annual report. Annual reports provide good summaries of attainment and effort in all subjects but do not consistently provide clear statements of what students need to do to improve linked to measurable targets. Reports in the sixth form are good and do provide clear improvement guidance.

71. The school uses a variety of means to inform parents effectively about school life and organisation. New parents and Year 7 parents are formally consulted about how well their children are settling and their satisfaction but there are no regular formal consultations in later year groups. Some parents support and help with sports teams, drama work, visits and residential trips and there is an active PTA which raises significant funds for the school. The acting headteacher recognises that more could be done to encourage parental contributions to the teaching programmes and to stimulate parental involvement in students' learning.

Overall the school has satisfactory links with parents and is committed to improving further the partnership relationship.

72. The school is making good progress towards implementing the recommendations of the new Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of students with special educational needs. The governors' annual report to parents provides appropriate information about the success of the special educational needs policy and the allocation of resources over the previous year. Students' special educational needs are identified by good liaison with primary schools, the results of tests taken before and after admission to the school and by the concerns of parents and teachers.

73. Students with statements of educational needs have their progress reviewed annually and their special needs assessed for the following year. Parents are invited to attend reviews and students contribute their own feelings about their progress. For these students at the end of Year 9, special transition plans are put into place which identify and provide for their needs in terms of future education and employment. Reviews are attended by representatives of the careers service and in appropriate cases by representatives of other special support services as well as by parents. The school has very good relationships with visiting specialists such as the educational psychologist.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The retirement of the previous headteacher at Christmas 2001 has meant that leadership and management are in a state of transition. The necessary redistribution of roles of the senior managers has been successful. The acting headteacher and her key staff are leading and managing the school very well. They share a commitment to improvement and have taken on the challenge in a highly professional and dedicated manner. The acting headteacher has led the school effectively through the inspection process, not an easy accomplishment, and enabled the school to be recognised as the good school it is.

75. Middle managers are traditional, but effective, in their approach and are totally involved in fulfilling their responsibilities. They are supportive and understand the needs to act in unison when necessary. Other key staff are very effective in fulfilling their roles. The library is well led, technicians and administration staff perform their tasks effectively. Caretaking and grounds staff look after the school well.

76. The governors are generally supportive, however, the depth of their understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the school varies. The group contains a wealth of experience, which it brings to the school willingly. Of late, it has become more proactive. However, some governors would benefit from training particularly regarding their evaluation of the school's and sixth form's value for money. Generally, governors fulfil their statutory duties well but still need to ensure that the requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form are met and students consequently receive their entitlement. A daily collective act of worship, as yet, has not been properly provided.

77. The committee structure that governors have in place is highly effective and suitable governors sensibly selected. The number of governors, who work in school is larger than usual. Although this offers benefits in understanding school problems, it can make chairmanship of committees difficult and limits who can be on the staffing committee and dismissal/appeals panels.

78. The school is an inclusive school. It cares about the needs of all students. This is clear in its provision for those with special educational needs but goes beyond. All students are valued and the acting headteacher can speak of the needs or problems of them all,

whether it is the student with a language problem, one with a family disturbance or, on rare occasions, those with behavioural difficulties. Equal opportunities are the norm and the school works hard to overcome some deep rooted cultural difficulties, particularly regarding gender issues. For example, in some lessons girls are too placid and allow boys to be the more dominant.

79. The school improvement plan is a detailed, useful and appropriate document. Targets are set and clear guidelines on their achievability are defined. Examination targets are viewed in light of the up and coming cohort and allow a degree of challenge.

80. Leadership and management of SEN are very good and contribute to the achievement of the school's aspirations for all of its students. Teachers work co-operatively with the special educational needs co-ordinator, who provides support and information for teachers on how they can best support students in lessons.

81. The income and expenditure per student during the last financial year were both just below the national average for similar schools. The local education authority financial management is well documented and the last audit report identified that the school operates very effective systems of financial control and administration. The issues and recommendations made by the auditors have been addressed.

82. Although the total income is below the national average, expenditure on learning resources is regularly prioritised in the financial planning and above the national average. For example a large proportion of a grant received from the Learning Skills Council is being appropriately used to improve the library resources. The number of students to each computer is satisfactory and becoming more favourable with the arrival of new lap top computers. The book provision in departments is good. The level and use of resources is satisfactory and improving.

83. The amount spent on employing teachers is above the national average. The school prioritises the maintenance of teacher expertise and keeping the number of students to every teacher to manageable and cost effective proportions. For example, during the last financial year the contingency fund was used to meet the cost of maintaining the level of expertise in a department faced with the prospect of a long term absence. Across the school the level of teacher expertise is good and the student teacher ratio in the sixth form means that the post - 16 provision is not taking resources from the main school.

84. The expenditure on the improvement and maintenance of the premises is high against national averages but as expected for a campus of this size. The costs of educational support staff, clerical staff and cleaning and caretaking are well below the national averages.

85. The governors' finance committee regularly monitors expenditure against the budget and budget holders apply principles of best value when allocating expenditure. Specific grants such as the Standards Fund are used appropriately and although heads of department understand how the financial support they receive is calculated and how they can bid for extra funding they are not always informed of their allocation from specific grants and how they should be spent.

86. The link between the school development plan and financial plan is good. The process of constructing both and the link between the two is enhanced by the very good level of expertise displayed by the school's senior management team and the governor's finance committee. However, there is very little evidence of the governors using the success criteria

in the school development plan to determine whether or not the impact of development represents value for money when considered against the level of financial support it received.

87. In spite of the difficulties that working on a split site creates a planned programmed of refurbishment and re-allocation of teaching bases has resulted in the overall standard of accommodation being at least satisfactory, with some of it, particularly in music, being very good. Most subjects are now taught in suited accommodation. As at the time of the last inspection the indoor facilities for physical education are still limited, but with the real prospect of the school getting the urgently needed sports hall, the situation will be much improved. There is no access for wheelchair users to the upper floors of either sites.

88. Students generally take good care of their school. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti, although there is some litter around the site after break and at lunchtime. The site manager and his cleaning and maintenance staff make a valuable contribution to the high standard of cleanliness throughout the school and the general attractiveness of the school site. Very good examples of students' work and photographs of school activities do much to enhance the appearance of the buildings.

89. The school has sufficient well-qualified, experienced teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum effectively. There are more female members of staff than males. Although this has no obvious impact on students' learning, the lack of balance is unfortunate. There is an effective system for the induction of both experienced teachers and newly qualified teachers in place that ensures they receive the necessary support to carry out their roles effectively in the shortest possible time. The quality of mentoring is good and is a reflection of the school's success as a provider of initial teacher training. Performance management is well established and the school has benefited from a smooth transition from an established appraisal system. Good monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching takes place through the line managed performance management system and objectives are appropriately linked to the school improvement plan.

90. Learning resources in the school are overall good and are used to support the curriculum well. The school makes good use of outside educational resources and teachers arrange numerous visits that broaden students' education. The ICT resources in the school are good. All classrooms are networked and there is Internet access in all of these locations as well as in the library. This supports independent study, though sixth form students do not have the level of access they need during their study time.

91. The library is a very good resource. Although the ratio of books to students is relatively low, the librarian has developed a number of strategies that make up for this. The school has a contract with the educational library service and receives a good number of books from them. The librarian has also developed strong links with the county library service and its resources are available for the use of the school. A measure of the success of the librarian is the fact that book loans have increased nearly ten fold since she arrived.

Sixth form

92. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The school's aims are fully reflected in the planning and work of the sixth form. The head and deputy head of sixth form, work closely together to monitor students' academic and personal development. They conduct individual student interviews three times during the year following subject reviews. Access to the head of the sixth form for all students is open and she provides much individual support and guidance.

93. There is no formal line management link to the senior management team. The procedures for monitoring, evaluation and development of sixth form provision are not clear in some areas. The sixth form is part of the school's appraisal system and good strategies are in place to monitor teaching. A target for sixth form development is to increase the number of students entering higher education but there is no strategy to develop more routes into the sixth form for lower attaining students. The head of sixth form is insufficiently aware of statistical information that impacts on the development and planning of the sixth form.

94. Students also have management responsibilities, for example as assistants to form tutors and heads of house. They carry out these responsibilities very well and their personal development benefits considerably.

95. The accommodation for 195 students is cramped and the social area becomes particularly over crowded at breaks and lunch times. Many students find their own areas to study and these include going back to subject bases in order to use ICT resources.

96. The balance of funding for the sixth form is very well planned and monitored. The sixth form is cost effective and gives good value for money. The financial control and administration of sixth form resources is an integral part of the very effective systems applied to the whole school. The income and expenditure per student is higher in the sixth form than for the remainder of the school and across the whole school the amount spent on employing teachers is above the national average. The school and its governors, in its financial planning, prioritises the maintenance of teacher expertise and keeping the number of students to every teacher to manageable and cost effective proportions. The level of teacher expertise in the sixth form is good and the planned use of specific grants will improve the sixth form provision. The student teacher ratio in the sixth form means that the post -16 provision is cost-effective and is not taking resources from the main school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. In order to improve further the standards achieved by pupils, governors, the headteacher and staff should seek to:

- (1) Improve the provision for religious education by
 - Ensuring that statutory requirements are met in Years 10, 11 (199)
 - Strengthening the religious input in lessons in Year 9 (198)
 - Ensuring that there is a clearer emphasis on the teaching of world religions, in addition to Christianity in Years 7 to 9 (198)
 - Completing the new schemes of work for all years (199)
- (2) Improve links with industry by
 - Strengthening those already in existence (63.48)
 - Using creative, imaginative and co-operative ideas to encourage industries to want to have links with the school (48)
 - Widening the scope of linkage, to include industries outside the immediate environment (48)

- (3) Improve departmental schemes of work so that all subjects include both expected and possible uses of ICT, which reinforce IT lessons and consolidate skills gained
(128), (135), (150), (159), (168)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the provision of religious studies to meet statutory requirements (199)
- (2) Improve social and study accommodation and ICT resources (95)
- (3) Improve links, through active line management, to the senior management of the school (93)

Minor issues

Provide a daily act of collective worship (76)

Provide more time for personal, social and health education in Years 7 to 9 (63)

Improve resources for the library so that it is able to provide the high quality study area its prospective new room deserves 91

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	151
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	6	45	69	28	0	1	0
Percentage	4	30	47	18	0	1	0

Sixth form

Number	3	27	16	4	0	0	0
Percentage	4	56	30	10	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. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [] – [] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1396	200
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	117	0

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	18	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	269	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	13

Student mobility in the last school year

No of students

Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	51

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	155	118	273

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	104	111	114
	Girls	98	84	88
	Total	202	195	202
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (81)	71 (70)	74 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (37)	45 (37)	32 (33)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	115	99
	Girls	91	93	85
	Total	180	208	184
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (67)	76 (67)	68 (72)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (21)	41 (32)	25 (23)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	129	122	251

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	73	127	129
	Girls	74	119	121
	Total	147	246	250
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	59 (62)	98 (98)	100 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	40
	National	39

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	62	73
	National	n/a	n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	42	34	76

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	19	19.4	19.2	4.3	3.2	3.9
National	17.8	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.5	2.9	2.7 (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 students who achieved all those they studied	School	11	82
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	6
White	1516
Any other minority ethnic group	64

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	45	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	92.65
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.2:1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	253

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.25
Key Stage 4	21.93

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	3,771,843
Total expenditure	3,785,204
Expenditure per student	2,405
Balance brought forward from previous year	128,358
Balance carried forward to next year	114,997

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22.35

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1596
Number of questionnaires returned	402

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	61	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	56	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	57	10	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	58	16	2	1
The teaching is good.	29	61	5	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	53	19	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	49	8	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	44	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	54	20	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	29	58	5	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	57	6	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	46	10	1	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths.

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- Confident relationships between students and with teachers.
- Improving standards especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Very effective leadership and management.

Areas for improvement.

- Raising attainment at GCSE.
- Lack of confidence shown by girls in some classes in Years 8 and 9.
- Inclusion of statements of provision for ICT and numeracy in the departmental handbook.

99. In 2001, the examination results of students in Year 9 were above the national average and the average for similar schools. The trend of improvement in recent years has been below the national trend. Girls attain higher standards than boys but by a narrower margin than is found nationally. Results at GCSE in English were above the average of similar schools for the proportion gaining grades A* - C and in line with the national average. In 2001, most students did less well in English than their average in other subjects in which they were examined. Results in English literature were above the national average. The results of girls exceeded those of boys by a narrower margin than the national difference. In both examinations, the proportion of students gaining grades A* - G was above average.

100. In work seen, standards are above average in Year 9. Students listen carefully and with quick understanding to teachers and each other. If unsure, they ask for further explanation. They speak clearly and confidently and most take full advantage of opportunities to express their views and opinions. Students, including those who entered the school with very poor skills, read aloud accurately. Particularly when working in pairs or small groups, they are able to recognise in the texts they read significant detail and implication and some of the ways by which writers achieve their effects. Development of these skills is helped by encouragement to annotate and highlight the text. Students take pride in written work and present it neatly. The majority has good skills in the organisation and expression of writing. They write in appropriate paragraphs and sentences and are generally accurate in spelling and punctuation. A significant minority of students fails to use full stops appropriately and frequently misspell words in every day use. Technical terms and words encountered in lessons are usually spelled accurately.

101. Standards in Year 11 are average. Students demonstrate good skills of listening and speaking when working in groups or as full classes. They are confident in expressing opinions and judgements and are careful to provide examples or other evidence to support their points. Reading aloud is above average and most read with good understanding of meaning and of how writers influence their readers. The quality of written work is very variable. Higher attainers write clearly, effectively and, usually, accurately for a wide range of purposes. They draw upon rich vocabularies which they use appropriately and they

understand how to influence the responses of their readers. Lower attainers communicate at least the main sense of their material and try to write appropriately for their purpose.

102. Weaknesses of spelling and punctuation reduce the quality of the work of many students including that of some with otherwise good skills. Expression often lacks clarity and precision of phrasing and sentences sometimes wander out of control. There are, sometimes, weaknesses in the selection and organisation of material.

103. The high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes of students greatly contribute to the quality of their learning and achievement. Examples of excellence were noted in classes throughout the age and ability ranges. Students enjoy very good relationships with teachers and each other. They are proud of their own successes and value the achievements of others. In only one lesson did the inattentiveness of a small minority significantly reduce the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

104. Achievement is good by comparison with earlier attainment for students at all levels of ability and in all Year groups. Very good progress is made by the significant number who enter the school with poor literacy skills. Their achievements in public examinations exceed reasonable expectation based upon their attainment at entry. The most able students make good progress because they are appropriately challenged. They are known to teachers who support and monitor their progress effectively. Schemes of work match the needs of students at all levels of attainment and the requirements of the national curriculum. Because students are almost always confident in themselves and each other, they become increasingly willing to explore ideas, offer opinions and arrive at judgements. This promotes good learning. The achievements of some students in Year 11 are restricted by erratic patterns of attendance. In a very small number of classes in Years 8 and 9, girls, although well-behaved, were so reluctant to contribute to the shared activities that it was difficult to assess their skills and understanding.

105. The quality of teaching is good. It is often very good and is never less than satisfactory. Lessons are linked to previous and future work so that students see the relevance of what they are doing. Teachers identify appropriate learning aims for classes and work towards them at a brisk speed and in a lively manner. They communicate to students their own enthusiasm for their work. Tasks are very clearly explained so that students begin their work with confidence. There is a variety of linked activities which helps students to sustain concentration. Teachers encourage students to contribute to their learning as active participants. They use questions not only to confirm understanding but also to extend it. Teachers have good understanding of the strengths and needs of individual students and provide appropriate encouragement and support. They have high expectations of the efforts and achievements of all and, because relationships are generally very good, students respond positively by speaking clearly and writing in a mature manner.

106. The work of the department benefits from very effective and energetic leadership. Teachers are determined to continue to raise standards. Although this is a very large department which has experienced considerable changes of personnel in recent years, there is remarkable consistency in the style and effectiveness of teaching. There has been good improvement since the previous report. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. The gap between the performances of boys and girls has been narrowed. Schemes of work have been revised and are now more detailed though not prescriptive. Students now benefit from consistent provision of opportunities to develop and express their opinions. The need to improve the accuracy of students' writing is being addressed and there is much evidence of success particularly though not entirely in Years 7 –9.

DRAMA

Strengths

- The quality teaching and learning is good.
- Schemes of work progressively develop skills.

Areas for improvement

- Weaknesses in the quality of written work

107. Results at GCSE were below average for the proportion of students gaining grades A*- C in 2001. In recent earlier years, results matched the national average and in 2000 were higher.

108. Students have weekly drama lessons in Years 7 and 8 and fortnightly lessons in Year 9. Increasing numbers choose to take the subject to GCSE. Work done in the subject contributes significantly to progress in speaking and listening, to the development of skills of working together in groups and to students' understanding of literature. Techniques of drama are used in subjects such as English and personal and social education to encourage students to explore relationships and experiences.

109. Evidence of the inspection confirms that standards of attainment match national levels at the ends of Year 9 and Year 11. Students develop good skills of planning, performance and evaluation because they begin to establish them from early in Year 7. Most become able to improvise and to use techniques such as hot-seating and freeze frame. They understand the importance of gesture and facial expression to communicate with an audience. Although some very good and even excellent use of mime was observed, this is not a general strength. Students make good progress because they enjoy their work and are confident in their relationships with teachers and each other. They are pleased with their own successes and applaud the achievements of others. Unusually, in a Year 9 class, almost all the girls lacked the confidence to participate fully in a presentation based upon 'Macbeth.'

110. The quality of teaching is good and, in almost half the lessons observed, was very good. Teachers have very good levels of expertise and high expectations of students' effort and achievement. They identify clear learning objectives for lessons and ensure that students gain knowledge and experience at a brisk pace. Students sustain their concentration so that learning is effective. Whenever it is appropriate, teachers require students to arrive at their own decisions, to analyse outcomes of planning and to make any necessary alterations. As a result, students become imaginatively involved in what they do and learn to accept responsibility.

111. Since the previous report, the number of specialist teachers has increased. There is more emphasis on encouraging students to evaluate the quality of their performances. The quality of writing, however, continues to have an adverse effect upon attainment in examinations. Many students do not organise their material or express it well enough to show the true quality of their knowledge and understanding. Some of the spaces used for drama restrict opportunities for learning.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The standards attained by the end of year 9
- The quality of teaching
- The quality of learning
- Leadership and management
- The teaching and learning of numeracy

Areas for improvement.

- The use of assessment

113. The percentage of students reaching nationally expected levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was above national averages for all schools and in line with those for similar schools. Since 1998 there has been a trend of improvement in this percentage that has kept pace with the national improvement. The Year 9 results show that the school has at least maintained the rate of progress that most students accomplish before they arrive at the school and for a small percentage of them actually increases their rate of progress. Hence the percentage of Year 9 students achieving above the nationally expected level of attainment is high. There is no significant difference in the performance in national tests of ethnic minority groups or students who speak English as an additional language when compared with the remainder of the year group.

114. The percentage of students attaining GCSE grade C or above by the end of Year 11 in 2001 was as expected nationally for all schools and has been consistently close to or just above the national percentage since 1998. Although the improvement in results has kept pace with the national trend and shows an increasing number of students achieving the higher grades, boys consistently outperform girls and there is still some way to go until the percentage of students achieving the higher grades is in line with the national picture or reflects the attainment in Year 9. There is no significant difference in the performance of ethnic groups or students who speak English as an additional language when compared with the remainder of their year group.

115. The students' work seen during the inspection also indicates that a high proportion of them, including those on national numeracy strategy "catch up" programmes is reaching standards in line with or above national expectation. The highest attaining students in Year 9 easily exceed it by displaying a good understanding of all types of numbers, curved graphs, complicated shapes and formulae. Only one lesson throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 was seen where standards of attainment fell below the national expectation. This would indicate that the current trend of more and more students reaching national expectation and beyond by the end of Year 9 is likely to continue. The picture in Years 10 and 11 is variable with more students seen to be attaining below national expectation. For example, the least able students deal confidently with simple number patterns but struggle when working with fractions, decimals and percentages where more complex number work is required. This indicates that any improvement in the percentage of year 11 students achieving GCSE A*-C will be small over the next two years.

116. There is no consistent evidence that boys are out performing girls and the small numbers of gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the progress

of gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs is improving and likely to continue to do so as department policies become fully implemented.

117. From the time students enter the school until they take GCSE the quality of teaching they encounter is good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and clearly portray their enthusiasm for, and dedication to, the work they do. For example, it was not unusual to see teachers employ creative and practical introductions to lessons involving missing numbers and the movement of shape that fully involve students in a discussion of the learning to follow. As a result, the teachers are effective, particularly in their teaching of basic skills and management of students. Students regularly have good opportunities to use ICT, discuss mathematics and practise mental and written calculation skills. Furthermore, it is the care teachers' display for their students and the high expectation that they place on learning and behaviour that ensures both are good and a high percentage of students achieve a GCSE qualification. Most of the students spoken to, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have a high regard for the subject and their teachers that is reflected by a high level of interest in the subject, working at a good pace, concentrating hard and being very productive. A further indication of student attitudes is the exceptionally high attendance at all the extra –curricular mathematical activities on offer.

118. The curriculum is good, well balanced and includes all the elements of the national curriculum. The emphasis placed on implementing the national numeracy strategy, teaching thinking skills in Years 7, 8 and 9 and offering potentially challenging coursework in Years 10 and 11 enriches the curriculum. The impact on students' learning is to improve literacy skills and enhance their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, many of the least able students in Year 7 displayed levels of reasoning above national expectation, excitement at some of the learning outcomes and good social skills because of the high quality of the "missing digit" group work activity and the discussion that ensued.

119. Teaching is good overall. The teachers employ sound procedures for assessing students' attainment and effort that include making regular judgements of the national level attained using test results and marks awarded for work in class and work done at home. These results along with the outcomes of national testing are efficiently stored with the use of ICT and are used flexibly to allocate and frequently review the organisation of students into ability groups; the targets set for improvement and the schemes of work. However, the marking and use of diagnostic assessment is an area for development recognised by the teachers and supported by the evidence gathered during the inspection. At present the limited use of diagnostic assessment reduces the:-

- quality of information provided for new staff to ensure learning continuity and progression,
- students' knowledge of their own learning and thereby the quality of the targets set with them for improving their individual progress
- identification of specific mathematics to be targeted in the subject's plan for development

120. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of leadership and management is good. This is a highly motivated, committed and cohesive department that has a clear direction and priority to improve standards through high quality teaching and learning and has the capacity to do it. The priorities for development are clearly documented and the departmental procedures, including those of monitoring and evaluation and the action taken, through performance management and other strategies, to meet the school's targets, clearly reflect the direction. The suite of rooms is used well. Displays are exceptional and reinforce the department's view that language and literacy skills improve a student's access

to learning and higher standards. Full advantage is made of the nearby ICT suites to use the internet to work with real data and use a wide range of software to explore shape, space, numbers and graphs.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The department is very well led and managed.
- The teaching is very good.
- The care of students is very good.
- The students' attainment is above average.
- The students' achievement is higher than expected.

Areas for improvement.

- To continue to develop the good practice of monitoring student progress by setting individual subject specific student targets.

122. By the end of Year 9 students' performance in the 2001 National Curriculum tests was above the national average. The proportion of students who obtained level 5 and above was higher than the national average and the proportion that obtained level 6 and above was close to the national average. There was little difference between boys' and girls' performance. In comparison with similar schools performance was below average. Students' performance in science was better than that for mathematics and similar to that for English. Students achieved well, obtaining higher levels than their National Curriculum levels on entry to the school predicted. Although performance in the national tests has improved over the last three years this has been slightly less than improvement nationally.

123. In 2001 the proportion of students who obtained A*-C grades in the GCSE was above the national average and the proportion gaining A*-G was also above the national average. Students' performance in science was better than that in mathematics and English and girls did slightly less well than boys, which is the reverse of the national trend. Students achieve well. Their examination performance at the end of Year 11 exceeded expectations based upon their Year 9 statutory test performance.

124. The standard of work seen in books and lessons overall was good and mirrors student performance in national and public examinations. In Key Stage 3, Year 9, high attaining students are able to calculate pressure and can use electromagnetic theory to explain how relays and electric bells work. Most middle attainers in a Year 8 lesson on fossil fuels were able to explain why coal and oil are called fossil fuels. High attaining students in Year 9 are able to plan experiments well. They can carry them out, make observations and take and record accurate measurements. They can analyse their data effectively and evaluate their experiments. Both high and low attainers produce a level of practical work that exceeds the national expectation. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology are developed well. In Key Stage 4 many high attaining students are able to balance symbolic chemical equations and complete ionic equations. They are also able to understand the transformer principle and carry out transformer calculations. Nearly all students know the principles underlying basic series and parallel circuits. By the end of Year 11 scientific investigative work has progressed to a very good standard with many students obtaining the highest marks in the GCSE coursework component. Students have developed literacy, numeracy and ICT in science to a good standard.

125. The quality of teaching overall is very good and is a strength of the department. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In Key Stage 3 the teaching seen was good overall and half the lessons seen were good or very good. Where the teaching was very good, teachers ensured that students were able to understand the necessary concepts required for a more complex idea before moving on to it. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher ensured that students had a complete understanding of the concepts solute, solvent and saturated solution before developing the idea of solubility. In Key Stage 4 the teaching seen was very good overall. Three quarters of the lessons seen were very good or better and some excellent teaching was seen. The teaching was very good when the teacher involved students at all stages in the lesson to ensure that they were actively involved in the learning process. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on artificial selection, note-taking from the screen not only involved students in copying down information into exercise books but also in completing a chart to ensure that they could use and understand the information they had noted. As a result students grasped the ideas of artificial selection very effectively. Teachers often displayed very good or excellent subject knowledge that enabled them to structure their lessons extremely well. This was often coupled with an enthusiastic delivery, very high expectations of student achievement and expert exposition resulting in students learning scientific ideas at a very high level. Excellent teaching in a Year 11 lesson on inherited gender linked disorders like haemophilia and colour blindness, resulted in the teacher structuring the lesson content in a way that enabled students to develop their understanding in a hierarchical manner, each stage leading on to the next. The delivery of the lesson was so enthusiastic that students were immediately inspired and they responded very well to the teacher's very high expectations by developing ideas that are characteristic of the highest GCSE grades. An outstanding feature of the teaching at both key stages that supports student learning is the very good quality of relationships that teachers establish with their students. Teachers support the needs of all students well, including those with special educational needs and, as a result, all students make good progress. Student progress is monitored well, both in lessons and over time. Student profiles track student progress over time in both key stages and, although individual student targets are not yet in place, the department is working towards this.

126. The science department schemes of work contain full National Curriculum coverage at both key stages and the time allocated to science overall is good. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information communication technology is incorporated in the schemes of work. The system of banding is used to facilitate the needs of low, middle and high attainers and good provision is made within these bands for those students who have special educational needs, gifts and talents. Good cross-curricular links have been identified with geography, mathematics, physical education and information and communication technology and a good range of extra-curricular activities has taken place that has enriched students' experience in science such as courses for the most able, competitions, scientific educational visits and activities linking science with music and drama.

127. The leadership and management in science are very good. The science co-ordinator conscientiously ensures that effective structures are in place to support the students' learning, the professional development of staff and the development of the subject. Documentation is well organised and provides colleagues within the department with clear information and guidance. The science co-ordinator, who is also the head of biology, is supported well by the head of chemistry and head of physics and other colleagues within the department. Four excellent laboratory technicians provide invaluable support for the teaching members of the team. All staff contribute well to the science education of students and to raising standards. Resources and accommodation are good. Health and safety requirements are addressed well and are practiced in the classroom. All hazardous substances, including radioactive materials, are stored in accordance with statutory regulations.

128. Since the last inspection teaching has improved and there are now examples of excellent teaching in Key Stage 4 and GCSE examination results are now consistently above the national average. Students now have more opportunity to apply their skills in information and communication technology to science but use needs to be more firmly embedded within the schemes of work.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- The teachers' high expectations of their students' effort and behaviour.
- The very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- To develop the use of ICT throughout the department.
- To compile a folio of assessed art work to standardise teachers' judgements.
- To address the recent decline in boys' attainment at GCSE

130. The standards attained in art and design by students, in Years 7 to 9, are good. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. This represents very good achievement when considering that the standard of attainment on entry was below average for the majority of students.

131. Students at this age are making very good progress in exploring, acquiring and using skills with a broad range of media and techniques. Particular strengths seen include the very vigorous mark making used in drawings based on the work of Jasper Johns and African masks. Large and often complex paper and tissue structures show the students' readiness to explore the qualities of materials. Their general awareness of artists' works is satisfactory and influences much of their own work. Higher attaining students are successful in capturing the essence of the artists' style and appreciating its particular qualities. Lower attaining students make good progress in developing technical skills and control of materials but the artists' style is more incidental in their work.

132. In Years 10 and 11 the standards attained in art and design are far above the national average. In the 2001 GCSE examinations over 8 out of 10 students gained the higher A*-C grades compared to over 6 out of 10 students nationally. Girls performed significantly better than boys with 9 out of 10 gaining the higher grades. Over the past 5 years GCSE results have been consistently far above the national averages. Over the last 3 years however there has been a steady decline in the performance of boys while the girls' scores have remained constant. Even so they remain well above the average for boys nationally. On average, students taking art and design GCSE in 2001 gained about half a grade higher in art than in their other subjects. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall.

133. The vigorous mark making of earlier years continues and is used to very good effect in large scale drawings based on architectural details gathered from sketching visits to Chester and other local sites. Paintings derived from these studies show excellent qualities of colour, tone, texture and form in representing the older and more modern styles of building. Three-dimensional works in ceramics and card are very well made and successfully capture the style of the artist or culture represented. Students are able to explore cultural styles through project work and a small number are using personal experiences to make very good researches into middle and far eastern cultures. Lower attaining students tend to rely on copying images closely and demonstrate adequate skills whereas higher attainers are able to

combine a variety of designs and embellish them to successfully create new objects and images

134. The quality of teaching is very good overall; it is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject shows in the way that they present information and demonstrations, instilling confidence in students to follow their lead. A teacher's personal enthusiasm for early Renaissance art was very effectively transferred to Year 7 students through a lively and knowledgeable introduction to the project. Lessons are very well planned with well-prepared resources. The emphasis on practical work and developing skills gives all students the opportunity to succeed. Those with special needs are well known to their teachers and given extra attention in lessons. Higher attaining students and those with a particular talent for art and design are challenged to explore techniques in more depth and to evaluate the results. Teachers have high expectations of their students' effort and behaviour especially at GCSE level. Well targeted questioning draws all students into the lessons and very good individual guidance gives them a clear and practical way forward. Students' attitudes and behaviour in art and design are good overall and in one third of lessons seen they were very good. A minority of students in some lower year groups did not settle well to their work and their talking slowed their own work and the pace of the lesson as a whole. The large majority of students are polite and have good relationships with their teachers and peers.

135. Provision for teaching literacy and numeracy through art and design is satisfactory. Students record the processes they use in detail and a useful glossary is kept in their sketchbooks but the expressive use of descriptive language is less well developed. Aspects of numeracy including measurement, shape, proportion and ratios are effectively taught as they arise in the projects. The use of ICT in the subject is under developed and not properly embedded within schemes of work. Students use a selected list of internet websites to research into the lives and works of artists and to word process their findings. There are insufficient facilities within the department however for ICT to be taught effectively and it is little used as a creative tool. Art and design staff are undertaking ICT training but their skills are still at an early stage.

136. Procedures for assessment in art and design are good. In Years 7 to 9 very good assessment booklets are used to record grades, comments and evaluations of projects with input from students and teachers. The booklets contain informative sections on level descriptors, a glossary of art terms and other art and design information. The department does not yet have a folio of assessed work to set targets and standardise teachers' judgements of students' work at the end of Year 9. A similar recording system is used in Years 10 and 11. Assessments of grades at this stage however are very secure due to the head of department's role as a GCSE moderator.

137. The leadership and management of the art and design department are very good. The head of department sets a clear educational direction for the subject and is well supported by a skilled and committed staff. Strategies for teaching and the moderation of examples of works are effectively carried out at regular departmental meetings. The formal monitoring of teaching as part of the performance management programme was found to be very useful by all members of the department but informal monitoring is limited by the diverse locations of the art rooms.

138. The accommodation and resources for art and design are good. Of the four rooms three are of a good size but the distances between some of the rooms restricts the communication and cohesion of the department. Storage facilities are adequate but the space is inefficiently used due to poor shelving. There is a very good stock of basic materials and equipment but ICT is under resourced.

139. Improvement in art and design since the last inspection is good. Printmaking, ceramics and sculpture are all now part of the curriculum but the development of ICT and photography remain outstanding. GCSE results have been maintained at their very high level.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students reach good standards in textiles, graphic products and food technology at end of Year 11.
- Achievement is good in relation to prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Co-ordination of the work of the department is very good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

Areas for improvement.

- Increase opportunities for students to work independently.
- Provide more opportunities for students to be involved in assessing their work.
- Use assessment information more to monitor the progress of students at end of Year 9 and to set targets for improvement.

141. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A*-C matched the national average. Similar results have been gained overall in recent years. Good improvement is shown in the results of boys which are now average when compared to national standards although still below those reached by girls.

142. In work seen, standards are average by Year 9. Students reach similar standards in all aspects of the subject and have good practical skills. They have a good awareness of safety and use a wide range of hand and machine tools competently. Students communicate their ideas well graphically, using formal drawings and sketching. They have a sound knowledge of nutrition and the ingredients they use because this is taught as an integral part of practical lessons. Because they are encouraged to work creatively in textiles, students design products which are imaginative and show skilful use of surface decoration to fabrics, for example when they make cushions in Year 9. Students have a sound knowledge of mechanisms and measure, mark and cut materials accurately in resistant materials. They have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the design process because it is inconsistently and insufficiently used to underpin their work overall. Students make errors with spelling of commonly used words but new technical words are usually spelled correctly and students understand their meanings because teachers introduce subject related vocabulary carefully and relevantly. Students have satisfactory understanding and skills for using computerised equipment to design and to manufacture items of work in textiles and resistant materials.

143. In work seen, standards are above average overall by Year 11. Students reach higher standards in food studies, graphic products and textiles. Although standards are lower in resistant materials, they generally match the ability of students, based on predictive tests. The standards of a significant minority are adversely affected by absence from school. Students confidently design and make products in textiles and graphics and they plan and prepare food products to meet the needs and wants of a range of consumers in food technology. In textiles and graphic products students interpret themes imaginatively to design their work. For example, high standards are reached in textiles by students designing

and making soft furnishings based on an Indian theme, and in graphic products when they make facades for buildings. Students have good construction skills and a very good knowledge of health and safety issues. They understand industrial processes and apply quality control criteria appropriately, for example, when they make food products.

144. Achievement is good in relation to prior attainment. Students enter the school with below average skills and knowledge of design technology and by Year 11 they are above average. In Years 7 to 9 students benefit from a well structured course which provides them with experience of a wide range of materials. Lessons and schemes of work are well structured to meet the needs of all students so that those with special needs make progress which is similar to that of other students. In Years 7 to 9 students acquire good practical skills and satisfactory knowledge of the materials they use. They listen to teachers and follow guidance which enables them to make good progress. Students make less progress with designing in Years 7 to 9 because they have too few opportunities to work independently following the full design process. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to develop practical skills and increase their design skills. They make good progress with completing assignments linked to examination coursework. Independent written work improves with the help of effective guidance from teachers who prompt students to produce more length and depth in their work.

145. The quality of teaching is good overall; it is often very good and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they communicate clearly to students together with their own enthusiasm. They establish very good relationships with students which earn them their trust and respect. Teachers organise and manage their lessons well, with good pace and a variety of activities to maintain students' interest and concentration. In the best lessons, students have opportunities to develop creativity and to work independently to solve problems. The importance of keeping to deadlines and time targets in lessons is emphasised from the start so that students acquire good time management habits for examination coursework projects in later years. Although teachers are not yet fully conversant with the requirements of the new Code of Practice for students with special needs, they have a good instinct for supporting them appropriately and are successful in raising their self-esteem and confidence. Homework is provided at appropriate times and forms a relevant extension of classwork. Teachers reinforce students' numeracy skills through insistence on accuracy of measurement and calculation. The most able students are provided with opportunities to reach their potential. The high standards of behaviour of students and their very positive attitudes have a significant effect on their learning and achievement. The care they take to present their work well indicates pride and a determination to succeed. Students, both boys and girls, of all levels of ability, sustain concentration and use time efficiently.

146. The department benefits from effective co-ordination. Despite the unfavourable geographical separation of different subject rooms, teachers maintain good relationships and a sense of unity when they meet for formal and informal meetings. They have a high level of commitment to succeed which has resulted in raised standards. Staff are effectively deployed to meet the needs of the curriculum and of students. Although accommodation is generally good, and has improved since the previous inspection, there are still some unsatisfactory elements such as the small size of some workshops and the lighting and general ambience of the graphics room which do not reflect modern aspirations in the subject. Teachers have very positive attitudes to coping with these difficulties. Because of these and the very good behaviour of students, learning in lessons is effective.

147. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. This is evident in improved standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11, particularly of boys. Improvement to the curriculum for design technology has brought about more even standards except for

resistant materials where there is a problem of attendance and pupils are generally of lower ability.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and high expectations.
- Standards in both key stages.
- Good quality learning through carefully structured tasks.
- The improved performance of boys.
- The development of thinking skills and decision-making.

Areas for improvement.

- Increased use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.

149. On entry to the school, students' attainment is below national expectations. All students make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. By the end of Year 9 their attainment is above national expectations. GCSE results have improved steadily over the last three years and the proportion achieving grades A* to C is now above the national average. The achievement of boys is better than that found nationally and is closer to that of girls.

150. In Year 7 students show a good grasp of mapping skills and are able to use scales, grid references and directions proficiently. They understand how to locate places using latitude and longitude and develop good atlas skills. The use of decision-making exercises challenges them to use their geographical knowledge in a positive way. In Year 8 students understand the processes at work in the development of river channels and use hydrographs to explain stream flow. In Year 9 students show particularly good knowledge of the factors affecting the growth of population and are able to construct population pyramids. Students in a revision lesson in Year 11 understand and are able to discuss the reasons for the increase in the global demand for energy and the issues arising from this. Throughout both key stages students show a high level of competence in the use of numerical skills to present and interpret a wide range of geographical data. They have a good understanding of geographical vocabulary and make good use of opportunities to extend their writing skills. Students in all years research topics on the Internet and use word processing to write reports, but increased use of ICT, properly embedded within schemes of work, for data presentation is needed for GCSE coursework

151. Students of all abilities make good progress by the ends of Years 9 and 11. They show growing competence and confidence in the use of geographical skills. Progress in both numeracy and literacy is a strength of the department. Diagrammatic work continues to improve as students move through the school. This is achieved because of the clear expectations of the department on the quality of illustrative work and the need for careful labelling. Students with special educational needs make good progress aided by modified tasks and the support of classroom assistants. Higher attaining students benefit from the opportunities given to them to develop their investigative skills. In Year 10 they devise their own research questions as part of their GCSE coursework on Llandudno.

152. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and communicate it well. Explanations are clear and skilful questioning makes

students think. Teachers have high expectations of their students and a good knowledge of their abilities. They plan their lessons well, with clear aims, which are shared with the students. The use of carefully planned fieldwork enriches the curriculum for all students. Homework is appropriate and is set regularly. Relationships in lessons are good and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect between students and teachers. Both boys and girls show an interest in their work and take pride in its presentation. All work is marked conscientiously, but occasionally lacks helpful comments to direct students towards improvement. The planning of the curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements and assessment is closely linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grade descriptors. This not only helps students to monitor their own progress, but assists teachers in the planning of their lessons.

153. The department is effectively led and the Head of Department has a commitment to maintain and improve standards. She provides strong and innovative leadership and all staff work well as a team in the supportive environment. Departmental policies and procedures are sound and followed consistently. Good use is made of the accommodation and the standard of display is very good. Resources match the needs of the curriculum and staff have worked hard to produce teaching materials for students of all abilities. Since the last inspection standards have risen at both key stages, with the introduction of problem-solving and decision-making skills making a positive contribution to this.

HISTORY

154. Overall, the quality of provision in history in both the school and the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students attain well above the national average in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations.
- The co-ordinator provides strong leadership to a committed team of specialist teachers.
- The department's history web page provides an excellent vehicle for research and celebrating the students' achievements.

Areas for improvement

- Improve access to original source material by linking with the local record office and newspaper archives.
- Increase the range of library books available for upper school research.

155. Throughout the school, the standards of work are good. Students enter the school at or near the national averages for their age. By the age of 14, the greater majority are at or above the national averages. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, a well above average number of 16 year-olds gain A*-C grades. Similarly, at post-16, more students are choosing to study history at advanced level, and recent results are above the national averages in A-B grades.

156. The students' achievements are very good overall. For example, 11 year olds acquire a sound understanding of the Norman invasion by discussing and re-enacting the struggle for the English throne. Whole class participation indicates their clear understanding of the politics behind the battles. By the age of 14, they have a sound understanding of the effects of the Industrial Revolution, and use the local environment to examine the importance of canals or the changeover from cottage industries to factory production. By the end of Key Stage 3, they investigate the origins of World War 1 and produce excellent 'Trench Diaries', some being made to look like original documents. They take pride in their work and there are good

examples of hand-written and word-processed imaginative essays. They make very good progress.

157. At end of Year 11, an increasing number of students selects history as an examination option and they make very good progress. They develop research and note-taking techniques, using these skills to prepare and present, in Year 11 for example, professional computer presentations on the Weimar republic. Handwriting and spelling skills are varied, but the majority takes pride in producing attractive and well-illustrated modules for their examination coursework. Sixth form history students take an AS level examination in Year 12 and an A2 examination in Year 13. They make very good progress. They improve their debating skills and show great sensitivity and consideration, such as when discussing the Holocaust and their recent trip to Auschwitz. They further develop their research skills, making good use of the department's excellent history web site. On residential trips, such as to Menai, they run a daily newspaper and e-mail links with the school and parents, outlining through text and photographs the historical sites they have visited.

158. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and often excellent. In all lessons, teachers present a consistent approach supported by excellent subject knowledge. Focused and challenging question and answer sessions reinforce the students' awareness of their learning. The well-planned and structured lessons are lively and fun, promoting genuine enthusiasm from students of all ages. For example, in one Year 7 class, where a third of the group has identified learning needs, they use mediaeval vocabulary with confident familiarity. Good student management ensures that no time is wasted and maximum learning takes place. The teachers make good use of graded worksheets to ensure that everyone completes the set task, and basic literacy skills are well promoted through key words, regular spelling tests and handwriting reminders. Homework is regularly set, and all work is marked in line with departmental policy. Well-kept records monitor the students' progress and are used to inform lesson planning, ability groupings and examination predictions.

159. High standards result from the work of an efficient departmental co-ordinator who provides excellent leadership and is ably supported by an enthusiastic and hardworking team of history specialists. Departmental documentation is very good and is the result of a whole team effort. Schemes of work, matched to the National Curriculum, provide a sound foundation for examination work but need to include properly embedded uses of ICT. Staffing levels are satisfactory as is the accommodation, but in larger groups, rooms are sometimes uncomfortably cramped. Classroom walls are attractively decorated with the students' work and displays, such as fields of remembrance and poppies, support the students' spiritual awareness. Resources are good overall, and considerably enhanced by the department's excellent web page and well considered residential visits at home and abroad. Good use is made of local museums and the Roman city of Chester to promote British cultural heritage.

160. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The issue of subject time allocation has been addressed and examination standards have consistently risen. Literacy and numeracy are well embedded into the curriculum, as is the significantly improved use of computers to support learning. The introduction of citizenship, taught through history, is developing well. History is now a strength of the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards in Years 7,8 and 9 are above national expectations
- Examination results at 16 are consistently above national averages
- There is very good leadership of the department
- Teaching is consistently good
- Teaching is well supported by the Systems Administrator

Areas for improvement:

- There is no comprehensive scheme of work to direct teaching and learning in information technology across the curriculum.
- There are no procedures for the assessment of performance in information technology across the curriculum.
- Students aged 14 to 16 who do not follow an examination course leave school without recognition of their achievement in IT.

162. In the 2001 teacher assessments students aged 14 attained standards that were above the national averages. These results are part of a steadily improving picture. All students, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. Standards observed in classrooms during the inspection were above national expectations. This is an improvement on standards observed during the last inspection, which were seen to be around national expectations.

163. The IT department has developed a good basic skills course for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. This is very effective in equipping students with skills that they then go on to apply in a variety of subjects in the curriculum. The courses are especially effective because the time allocated to them is low. They feature good levels of challenge. Students develop good communication skills using IT applications such as desk top publishing, presentational packages and web page design. This work helps them to develop their literacy skills by providing tasks that challenge both technical and communication skills. They model information in spreadsheets. This part of the course contributes well to numeracy skills as students use formulae to calculate in contexts such as profit and loss accounts. They produce a range of charts to communicate their findings. Their work on databases is of a high standard. By Year 9 they are producing their own databases using a very good range of the features of industry standard software. Students are making good use of the Internet for research. Due to the low time allocation control technology and data logging are not taught in depth by the IT department. Students acquire these skills in technology and in mathematics and science. This is part of the developing cross-curricular use of IT in the school and makes a sound contribution to standards in IT.

164. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the percentage of students who gained A-C grades was above the national average. This has been the case for several years and is a strength of the department. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The standards observed during the inspection by students in the two examination courses, GCSE and GNVQ, exceeded national expectations. This is an improvement on the situation noted in the last inspection report which said that standards were in line with national expectations. The small numbers of students who do not take an examination course attain at least average standards but leave school with no certification to testify that they have acquired competencies using a good range of industry standard software. Overall students achievements are good

165. Year 11 GCSE students develop a good understanding of key concepts and knowledge in the subject largely through their project work. Students acquire a good working knowledge of the software they use and are able to make well informed choices of which applications are most suitable for the projects they undertake. In such projects, which describe the development of a web site for a cinema chain, students draw on a good knowledge of the market and of aspects such as layout and appeal. The documentation which accompanies projects is largely full and well presented. Students produce user friendly systems that perform a good variety of functions such as stock control, booking systems and mail shots. GNVQ students in Year 10 make good use of the Internet to research topics. They acquire a sound knowledge of the main components of a computer system and know how they fit together.

166. Teaching is consistently good in information technology. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they impart effectively through expert demonstration and good quality feedback to individuals, which is a feature of practical lessons. Marking is good, though some students in Years 10 and 11 remain unclear about the standards they have attained. There is some inconsistency in the way teachers make written feedback available to students and in the regularity with which they make it available. Teachers encourage students to develop beyond initial tasks. They consistently offer a good level of challenge which leads to good learning for all. This is so, for example, in the teaching of web site development in Year 8. Students are taught a computer language used for this task and are encouraged to develop further in their own time using the guidance notes provided by the school's own web site. This site is a very good resource for all students studying IT as it contains a good deal of guidance and information to support learning. The pace of lessons is always good. Teachers keep introductions to a minimum so that students can get on with the practical work. This they invariably do with good levels of interest, concentration and application. Relationships are good. Teaching is motivational and teachers work hard to give students the confidence to develop their skills.

167. The subject is very well managed by the Head of Department. He has been responsible for the improvement in standards since the last inspection in Years 7 to 11 in the discrete IT courses. The basic skills course in Years 7 to 9 is good and is evidence of the high expectations of the department. The Head of Department also makes an important contribution to the training of teachers in other departments.

168. Cross-curricular information technology is not as well advanced as discrete IT courses, partly due to the fact that only half of the teachers in the school have so far completed the nationally funded training. The school recognises the need for continued development in this area and a teacher has been appointed to co-ordinate it. One important aspect of his job will be to formulate a whole-school scheme of work for IT that will direct the teaching of the subject across the curriculum. An equally important task will be to develop assessment procedures to track the learning of individuals to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Overall quality of teaching is good.
- Leadership by head of modern languages is very good.
- Teachers work well as a team, producing good materials for learning.
- Teachers take students on visits to France and Germany, so that students can use the languages.

Areas for improvement

- Some teachers need to use more pair work in the classroom.
- Students need to check their written work more carefully to avoid basic errors.
- The department lacks sufficient licences for computer software.

170. French and German are joint first languages and students begin one of these in Year 7 and continue with it to GCSE. In Year 8, in May, most students begin the other language, but three sets currently learn Spanish as a second modern language. In Year 10 students can continue with their second language to GCSE as well as their first foreign language. The department has suffered from staffing changes in recent years, and this impacted on French standards at GCSE in 2001. As a consequence, a few students in Years 10 and 11 are disapplied from studying a modern language.

171. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national standards in French in 2001. In comparison with national standards, French GCSE results were above in 2001. GCSE results in French were higher than standards in similar schools in 2001. They were higher than most other subjects in the school. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 showed students working above national standards. In Years 7-11 students are stronger in listening, speaking, and writing, and weaker in reading. Year 7 students were able to listen to the teacher describing a strange monster in French and draw the appropriate unusual number of eyes, arms and legs. Year 8 students could say what they did on the way to school, and how to travel to different places. Year 10 students were able to read the halves of seven sentences about school life in French, and understand the meanings well enough to match the two halves successfully for each sentence. Year 9 students could listen to a French song and write down the missing words on a work sheet.

172. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above national standards in German in 2001. German GCSE results were well above national standards in 2001. Results in German were well above standards in similar schools in 2001. They were also well above most other subjects in the school. Performance in the lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 showed students working above national standards. In Years 7 to 11 students are stronger in listening, speaking, and reading, and weaker in writing. Year 10 students were able to listen to a tape, identify medical problems, and when the patients could obtain a doctor's appointment. Year 11 students could say what they expected to do in September 2002 after their examinations. Year 9 students were able to read information in their text book and identify 4 people from the details given about each one. Year 8 students were able to write down items which had been left at home.

173. Some students learn Spanish as a second modern language in Year 9. This is not assessed as a national curriculum subject, and there have been no GCSE entries thus far. One Year 9 lesson was observed. Students could talk about rooms in a house in Spanish,

and recognise them on tape and in a reading text. They could also label the rooms on a diagram of a house in Spanish.

174. Overall, there is a good amount of written exercises and sustained writing in French and German: however, students make unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. Students do not check their written work carefully enough: the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving higher standards. Girls usually attain better results than boys. There are no significant variations between students of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Students have regular reading sessions. Students spend most of their time using the foreign languages in listening, speaking, reading and writing: this contributes to their literacy skills, but these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Numeracy activities have been incorporated successfully into schemes of work, and are used by teachers. At present students have good access to computers, and they also have e-mail links with students in France and Germany.

175. The overall quality of teaching is good. The overall quality of teaching in French is good. All of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The overall quality of teaching in German is also good. All of the lessons seen were good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching in the Spanish lesson was good. In all languages the quality of teaching is improving standards: students are achieving well and making good progress.

176. In French, German and Spanish teachers are proficient in the foreign language, have good accents, and project their voices clearly. They use the foreign languages for most of the lesson to develop students' listening skills. Most use a little English to check understanding or explain grammatical points. They plan a well organised sequence of activities, which involves the students in their learning. They exploit overhead projectors and other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are good, but a few students find it difficult to concentrate sufficiently. Time is used well, and teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: this improves listening and speaking skills, and develops confidence in the students. However, some teachers should use pairwork more. Staff display students' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Students' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Useful homework, which consolidates learning, is set regularly. The teaching of those with special educational needs is good, and meets the needs of these students as well. Teachers manage classes well, and give students a variety of experiences in the classroom, including songs, role plays, videos and class surveys, which extend and consolidate their learning. Teachers ensure that all students make appropriate progress. They provide challenging tasks for the higher attainers, and give support to those with special educational needs. Most students, including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons throughout the school. Almost all the students behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good throughout the school. Many students show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few students find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential.

177. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The head of modern languages monitors the progress of students in French, German and Spanish. The department is very well led and organised, has prioritised development plans, and works well as a team to produce resources for effective learning. The department has insufficient computer software. Visits to France and Germany encourage social interaction and personal

responsibility, and improve language competence. The text books and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of teaching, the attitudes of most students, visits abroad, and the leadership of the head of modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pairwork by some teachers, a lack of additional computer programs and the errors students make in written work are preventing students from achieving even higher standards.

178. The department has made good progress on the issues raised in the previous report. Students now use computers regularly, and take up in the sixth form has improved.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership
- Consistency of good teaching
- Extra-curricular activities
- GCSE results
- Use of resources including IT

Areas for improvement

- Use of homework in Years 7 to 9
- Increase number of students gaining A* and A grades
- Improve quality of class singing through more focus on pitch definition

180. Standards of attainment in work seen are above average overall. GCSE results have improved steadily over the past three years and, although the number of entries is too small for valid comparisons with national averages, in 2001 all candidates gained passes at Grades A-C. By Year 9 the students have a good familiarity with staff notation; they identify notes on the stave by letter names. However, when performing, many students are still too dependent on having the letter names written under the notes. The students listen well to music and can identify such devices as ground bass. They are familiar with the range of orchestral instruments and can recognize the various timbres. When playing and singing, the students can maintain independent parts well. They perform confidently on keyboards and percussion instruments with most using correct fingering systems. Their singing is spirited and enthusiastic but sometimes lacking in clear pitch definition. Students' compositions show good progression in Years 7 to 9, from simple phrases to song compositions based on chord sequences. There is also effective use of ICT to sequence compositions and arrangements. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls and students with special needs achieve well. In Years 10 and 11 the students' compositions show good use of chords and cadences and such devices as variations. Rhythm and timbre are well exploited and ICT is well used to produce and notate compositions. When listening to music the students are able to identify musical styles and match them to an appropriate time and place. Instrumental performance standards are good and the students' ensemble skills are well developed; the many opportunities for taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular groups are an important contributory factor here. The majority of the Year 11 students are performing at GCSE C plus level. In Years 7 to 9, taking into account standards on entry, the level of achievement is good. In Years 10 and 11 the level of achievement is satisfactory.

181. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The teachers have good subject knowledge and appropriate specialist skills for the instrumental teaching. Lessons are well

planned with a good variety of activities. An important strength of the teaching is the very effective use of resources such as video, audio and ICT. Students with special needs are well integrated into all the activities and respond well to a high level of individual attention. Generally the work is well matched to the students' needs with extension tasks and additional worksheets well used. The pace of lessons is usually good but in a few instances over-long explanations cause a loss of pace. Assessment procedures are effectively employed to monitor students' progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The management of students is good and this ensures good levels of concentration and productive working. The students have good attitudes to music and behave well. Their relationships are good and this means that they collaborate very well in group work. An indicator of the students' positive attitude to music is the outstanding support for the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and the good level of take-up for GCSE music. Homework is well used in Years 10 and 11 but insufficiently used in Years 7 to 9. A main strength of the teaching is its consistency. Three quarters of lessons seen were good or better and the remainder were satisfactory; no unsatisfactory lessons were seen.

182. The music department enjoys very good leadership by a hardworking head of department. The class and instrumental teaching staff are well co-ordinated and work with a strong sense of commitment, giving up a lot of their own time at lunchtime and after school. The development plan has appropriate aims and these are well implemented. The department is very well equipped with a good range of instruments and technology equipment. Although the accommodation is of temporary construction, and looks rather shabby from the outside, internally it is very good with plenty of spaces, which enable the department to provide a very practical curriculum for the students.

183. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and the examination results have also improved significantly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Strong leadership of the department.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by enthusiastic groups of students.
- Good quality teaching.

Areas for improvement.

- Consider offering students in Years 10 and 11 the opportunity to take up GCSE in dance

185. In July 2001 the proportion of students gaining the A*-C grade passes in the GCSE examination in physical education was well above the national average. Although there were more boys than girls taking the examination there was no significant difference in their attainment. Results have been consistently good since the last inspection and compare very favourably with the results achieved by the same students in their other subjects.

186. Students arrive from their primary schools bringing with them a range of physical education skills and experiences with some below that expected. They settle into the school quickly, make good progress and, by the time they are 14 years old, most are attaining levels of performances that are at least in line with national expectations, with a significant number doing even better. This judgement is in line with the teachers' assessments. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students is able to apply techniques, skills and competition rules to

several aspects of the physical education curriculum, most notably in volleyball, rugby football, soccer and netball. Basic skills are well developed and provide a sound platform for future developments. A good example of this was observed in a Year 7 tennis lesson where students of all abilities developed good striking skills, adapted them to tennis, and were then able to refine these skills as well as observing and evaluating their own and others' performances. In athletics above average ability has been successfully converted into expertise in several activities both in track and field.

187. Students continue to make good progress during Years 10 and 11 and, by the time they are sixteen years old, their attainment levels are higher than those seen nationally. In health related fitness lessons they understand the effects of exercise on their bodies, and how to prepare themselves properly for physical activities. Many students confidently lead their class in effective warm-up routines. They are developing good skills in a range of sporting activities and are able to apply the skills they have practised in full games situations. They are able to undertake a range of roles including performing, officiating and coaching. Students in the examination groups are developing understanding in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. They are becoming confident in their use of technical language, and most are providing course work folders that are well presented and detailed. They have a good understanding of the syllabus requirements and are able to effectively link practical and theoretical concepts.

188. Students with special educational needs are well integrated, are given much support by both teachers and other students and most reach a very satisfactory level of attainment. Teaching is sensitive, and there is no evidence of students with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented students are identified and are encouraged to extend their skills both in school lessons and with outside clubs.

189. The school has a justifiably high reputation for the performances of its many school teams and individual students. Many students have represented Cheshire in a variety of sports, and some have represented North West Counties. One of the school's current sixth form students has represented England at volleyball. School teams gain much success. The current Year 8 rugby team is competing in the national finals of the developing schools competition in London in May.

190. The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last report. All lessons were judged to be at least satisfactory and the majority was judged to be good or very good. A secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to the students through effective demonstration and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies with a careful sequence of activities, is a feature of most lessons. Good discipline which stresses respect and co-operation and effective class management are also a feature of most lessons. Teachers inject fun, enjoyment and real pleasure into all activities, ensuring that all students are given tasks that are sufficiently challenging and that all are totally involved in all lessons. Students respond very positively to this good quality teaching. They are enthusiastic, behave well, and the vast majority are prepared to work hard. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.

191. The curriculum, which meets statutory requirements, allows students to take part in a good range of activities. The limited indoor accommodation restricts the access of some students to some activities. Once the new sports hall is in use the department needs to ensure that all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have the opportunity to take part in all activities. In September 2002 the department began offering the students in Year 10 the opportunity to take the Junior Sports Leader Award. This award is a starting point for young people who wish to develop their sports leadership skills. This offer has been taken up by enthusiastic groups of both boys and girls. The time allocated for the subject for most students is

satisfactory although a few groups in Year 10 have only one lesson of physical education per week, making it difficult for these groups to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum.

192. Staff, including non specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported. Students have the opportunity to join skiing holidays to Austria and the department organises trips to national sporting events. Students in Year 7 take part in a residential outdoor pursuit trip, where they enjoy in canoeing, abseiling and orienteering. Many students are taking part in the well organized Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. These groups use the school's cottage in North Wales as a base for the expedition section of the awards.

193. Strong leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. Talented teachers work together effectively as a team sharing a commitment to the improvement of the department. High quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and helps the delivery of the subject. Departmental displays around the school effectively stimulate students' interest in the subject. The department has been awarded the Sportmark, which is a national recognition of high quality physical education provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The teaching is predominantly good
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject

Areas for improvements

- Meet statutory requirements in years 10 and 11 and the Sixth form
- Have a much stronger religious input to the teaching in year 9
- Have a clearer emphasis on the teaching of world religions, in addition to Christianity, in Years 7 to 9
- Complete the new scheme of work for all years

195. The school has not had a GCSE full or short course for several years so no statement can be made about standards of attainment in comparison to national standards. The current option group in Year 10 is the first to undertake a course for some time. The standards of work seen during the inspection, in the lessons and in their books, are broadly in line with the standards indicated in the examination syllabus for this option group. The students have a sound basic knowledge of the two religions they are studying, ie Christianity and Judaism. The students are familiar with and can use a good deal of the religious language and concepts associated with these two religions. The students have an adequate grasp of how the two religions work themselves out in issues of everyday life, such as in relationships, issues of justice and equality, the environment and religion and ethics. The students are good at giving their own opinions about many of the issues that they study but their ability to evaluate different responses using relevant evidence and argument could be stronger. Their written work is good. It is not possible to comment on the standards of attainment of the students who do religious education within the personal, social and health education programme as there is very little written work on which judgements can be made.

196. The standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are in the main below the standards indicated in the Agreed Syllabus. The students have an adequate grasp of some of the practices of Christianity, such as in rites of passage and festivals but they are less secure on

a knowledge and understanding of its beliefs and teachings. The students' knowledge and understanding of world religions is limited, though they do have a stronger working knowledge of some of the practices of Judaism. A lot of the students' knowledge and understanding, particularly in Year 9 revolves around moral and social issues and they cannot readily relate this to the three world religions that are to be studied in these years. In general the students are good at giving responses to many of the issues that are brought in during these years though these responses need to more explicitly rooted in the religious traditions that are to be studied.

197. Overall the achievement of students in religious education is satisfactory as the teachers work hard to ensure that the students make the best of the religious education that is available to them. Students with special education needs also make satisfactory progress as the teachers are aware of their needs and help them accordingly. More differentiated work would help the various abilities within the set groups and more extension work, particularly harder work, would be of benefit to the more able students and the gifted and talented. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of any other group.

198. Overall the teaching is taught is good with some satisfactory elements. The lessons are always well prepared and a good range of activities and methods are used to put across the content of the lesson. A particularly good aspect of the teaching is where the teachers give the students opportunities to make personal responses to the issues raised. All teaching is strong in the sense of knowing and applying good teaching techniques and in knowing how to keep the interest of students and how to motivate them. Some lessons, particularly in Year 9 and in the personal, social and health education programme, need a clearer and more explicit religious dimension to be presented to the students. The teaching also needs to have a greater general emphasis on the teaching of world religions, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Expectations in the lessons are generally pitched at the right level, but sometimes the more able students finish the work before the others and so additional differentiated work would be of benefit to them. In some lessons a faster pace would enable more learning to be done in the time available. Homework is set and the books are regularly marked. Overall the response of the students is consistently good and often very good. The students are well behaved and show an interest in their work. They work hard and are able to concentrate well and to sustain this concentration. The students are respectful of their teachers and of each other and they also respect the viewpoints of others. The students are always willing to get involved in the lessons and keenly participate in the discussions which are characteristic of many lessons. In general they have a very positive attitude to the subject and this is reflected in their attitudes and behaviour.

199. The department is well managed by a head of department who is new to the school. She is working hard to get the new syllabuses and schemes of work into place and to ensure that they clearly and explicitly reflect the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. It is important that this work is completed. Statutory requirements are not being met in Years 10 and 11 for the very large numbers of students who are not in the option group. Statutory requirements are not being met in the Sixth form. Overall there has been limited progress since the last inspection. The Agreed Syllabus is being implemented in Years 7 to 9 but there needs to be clearer planning for the teaching of another two religions and for more religious input in Year 9. The department uses some information technology in its work. It also makes some contribution to the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspect of the school and to literacy in the school with introduction, when explanations and use of new words and phrases are given. The staffing and accommodation are good but there are some limits to resources. The main religious education teaching room has some outstanding displays. The department has a very good capacity to succeed with the input of the new head of department.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocationally Linked Courses

200. Vocational courses give broad provision for the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11. These include GCSE economics, business studies, business communications and child development and GNVQ engineering, manufacturing and ICT. Several of these courses provide a good basis for further study in the advanced courses offered in the sixth form for example, ICT, economics and business.

201. Students in these groups have a wide range of abilities but they are mostly working above average standards. Girls in the Year 10 child development group are expected to gain 60 per cent A*-C grades in their final examinations. Students in Year 10 studying business communications are all attaining above, often well above, their predicted targets based on their NFER scores. Those students working on product design are also attaining high standards. Students on the Year 10 economics and business studies courses are attaining above the average expectation.

202. Teaching was good in all lessons seen. Teachers have good subject expertise and know the examination requirements well. Teachers are aware of individual students' needs and give appropriate tasks to ensure all students progress equally well, for example in business communications one student worked on text processing as an alternative accreditation. The attitude of pupils is good and frequently very good. The majority of pupils enjoy learning independently and find the subject material in these vocationally linked courses motivating.

203. Overall the variety of provision, quality of teaching and high level of pupil attainment and achievement make the vocational courses very successful.

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

In the inspection, nine subjects 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 [latest year for which national comparisons are available].

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
German	1	100	82	0	13	2.00	1.85
Music	1	100	84	0	29	1.00	2.41

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
Art and design	7	100	96	29	46	5.71	6.57
Biology	9	100	88	33	34	6.22	5.25
Chemistry	3	100	90	0	43	5.33	5.90
Computer Studies	18	100	86	17	23	5.11	4.62
Drama	4	100	99	25	38	5.50	6.59
Economics	4	100	89	0	36	5.50	5.52
English Language	15	93	91	27	30	4.40	5.27
English Literature	18	89	95	44	37	5.78	5.91
French	4	100	89	50	38	6.50	5.59
Full design and Technology	16	94	91	19	30	4.88	5.38
General Studies	47	85	85	36	30	4.98	4.91
Geography	10	100	92	20	38	5.80	5.74
German	6	100	91	17	40	5.33	5.81
History	10	100	88	50	35	6.20	5.45
Mathematics	7	57	87	0	43	1.71	5.80
Music	2	100	93	0	35	2.0	5.74
Social Studies	33	97	87	55	34	7.39	5.30
Physics	2	100	88	50	40	8.00	5.67
Sports/PE	9	100	92	33	25	6.22	5.09
Art and Design	12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.00	12.24

Business	13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.77	10.45
Leisure & Tourism	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.00	10.06

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure & Tourism	4	50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

204. The focus was on mathematics and biology, but work in physics and chemistry was sampled. In chemistry, three students entered the A level examination in 2001 and all gained a pass. In Years 12 and 13, the number of students has risen significantly and their work is in line with the national average. Students' modular results indicate that most students are attaining grades that match those predicted by their GCSE scores and a few are exceeding these. In the one lesson observed, teaching was good and learning secure. There is a need for more opportunities to be provided for independent learning, but overall the provision is good.

205. In physics, the examination results were well above average in 2001. The students did better than expected considering their GCSE examination results. One lesson was observed and the teaching was very good. Excellent resourcing and teacher support for individuals led to students gaining a very secure understanding of alpha particle reflection and number equations. Overall the provision is very good.

MATHEMATICS

206. Overall, the quality of provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Leadership and Management
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding
- Students interest, productivity and concentration

Areas for improvement.

- Adding appropriate value at 'A' and 'AS' level to the standards achieved in mathematics in Year 11.

207. The standards of attainment achieved by Year 13 students in 2001 were well below the national average for all schools. Since 1998 the A level results have varied considerably between being in line with and being well below the national average and therefore no clear trend can be identified. The 2001 AS level results achieved by Year 12 students were also below national averages but indicate that the A level results are likely to improve in 2002. The 2001 GCSE results were broadly in line with the national average. Since 1998 the GCSE results also vary considerably between being in line and being well below the national average and make the identification of a trend very difficult. Hence improvement since the last inspection is variable.

208. There is no significant difference in the performance at 'A' level, AS level and GCSE between boys and girls, ethnic groups or students who speak English as an additional language.

209. The students' A/AS level work seen during the inspection and the outcomes of their modular tests in Year 12 reveal a significant shortfall in standards when compared to the grades achieved at GCSE in Year 11. This is particularly true of the students who achieved A*- B in mathematics at GCSE. The majority of Year 12 A/AS level students perform well below expectation in their ability to independently interpret problems into mathematical language but display very good mathematical skills once the interpretation has been done. Year 13 students are better but many still lack the confidence necessary to interpret

mathematical problems independently. The GCSE re-sit results achieved in November and teachers' records indicate that the GCSE results should significantly improve during the current school year.

210. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and manage the students and the pace of learning well. Syllabuses are completed well before examinations take place and the quality of classroom interaction, including questioning is good. As a result, students are involved, productive, present their arguments efficiently and clearly enjoy the lessons. Teachers, while being very effective in their teaching of mathematical skills, often dedicate too much of the lesson to them and pay insufficient attention to developing reasoning and other thinking skills required for success at higher levels.

211. The curriculum provided for students is satisfactory. At A and AS level the department offers opportunities for students to study mechanics, statistics and decision making as applications of mathematics as well as mathematics itself. This enables students to connect their mathematics to other areas of study and in some cases reflect on their philosophies. For example, in decision mathematics the outcome that revealed a member of a work force was not required led to some debate about business ethics. The match between a student's prior attainment, future learning and the curriculum could be improved through the improved use of diagnostic assessment. At present, the assessment of a student's learning is not producing good quality targets for improving individual progress or lesson plans that are consistently differentiated to meet individual need.

212. The quality of leadership and management is good. The priorities for sixth form development are clearly documented and the action taken to meet the school's targets reflects the main priority to improve the examination results across the whole of Years 12 and 13. Strategies for staff development to meet the demands of sixth form teaching are satisfactory and the match of teacher expertise to the demands of the subject content is good.

BIOLOGY

213. Overall, the quality of provision for Biology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are rising and students make good progress.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding provides challenging work. Assessment is used to monitor students' progress effectively and good support is given.
- The subject is very well led and managed and a collection of good learning resources is being built up.

Areas for improvement.

- Students' independent learning skills are limited.
- There is a need for more ICT to be used within teaching.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural content of the curriculum is not formally identified.

214. In the 2001 'A' level GCE examinations, the proportion of students achieving grades A-B was in line with the national average whilst the proportion gaining A-E was well above. The average point score was well above average and, since the last report, has risen faster than the rising trend seen nationally. The school is able to show that, in relation to their GCSE

results, most students did better than expected and hence made good progress. For the past three years, all students entered for the A level examination have gained a pass grade. Numbers of students have remained steady over the past few years but the present Year 12 has seen a significant increase. More females than males choose to study biology, and overall tend to gain the higher grades.

215. Standards of work seen amongst current students are well above average. In Year 13, modular examination results would indicate a sharp rise in the numbers gaining the higher grades A to B, and that students are achieving well, relative to school predictions. Most show an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the syllabus topics. In microbiology, for instance, they extend their knowledge of a range of micro-organisms to a good understanding of modern industrial applications, and in physiology, relate the complex chemistry of plant nutrition to the anatomy of the leaf. They write coherently and are able to apply their knowledge effectively to novel situations. They put their numeracy skills to good use when, for example, they use statistical tests to evaluate the results of ecological investigations. Students in Year 12 have almost completed their AS course and have successfully taken their scientific knowledge and understanding to greater depths. In their study of biochemistry, for example, they competently describe the detailed structure of proteins, and in cytology, understand the complex nature of the cell membrane. They have very good practical skills and when doing practical investigations, can explain clearly the methodology involved and effectively relate it to scientific theory. Both Years 12 and 13 would benefit from further development of their independent learning skills.

216. Teaching is very good overall and as a result students learn very well. Teachers show very good subject knowledge when they use questions to probe students' understanding, and when they answer unexpected questions. Their explanations are clear and show an up-to-date grasp of the biological topics. Work is challenging and expectations are high. In one lesson seen for instance, the teacher extensively reviewed and discussed a range of genetics problems that effectively raised the students' understanding beyond the demands of the A level examination. Lessons are planned well and there is rigorous attention to safety and good practice when doing investigative work. Much day-to-day assessment is used to check and consolidate students' knowledge and understanding, and has a positive impact on their progress. Examination preparation underpins teaching and is very rigorous. Good interaction in lessons encourages students to show initiative. Whilst ICT is beginning to be used to support learning, there is a need for further development for its use in measurement and modelling. Useful homework is set regularly and marking is helpful. The programme of work is well-organised allowing students to make good progress, and the inclusion of a residential field course has many benefits of both a social and academic nature. Enthusiasm of the teachers for their subject is very evident and their commitment to teaching is very much recognised and appreciated by their students. They succeed in making their lessons both interesting and enjoyable. The technical support in biology is of a high standard.

217. Work in the subject is very well led and very well managed. Deployment of staff is particularly good and its flexibility make very effective use of teachers' expertise. The head of section has a clear vision for raising standards and together with the teaching team, strives to improve and provide the best opportunities for students. The curriculum is broad and prepares students effectively for their future careers, but spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects have not yet been formally identified. The assessment and monitoring of students progress is very good and they have a good understanding of how well they are doing, relative to their expected grades.

218. Since the last inspection, standards in examinations have risen, and more recently, a new programme of study and scheme of work have been introduced. Although only limited use is made of the library, students are provided with textbooks that match and support their

studies very well. A very good range of learning resources is being built up for students' use and exam preparation, and students' individual needs are well supported.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

219. The product design course was introduced in 2000. Standards were average in 2001 for students at the end of Year 12. In work seen, the current Year 12 is achieving average standards and in Year 13 standards are above average. The quality of teaching is very good and students are adapting well to the demands of advanced level work. They make good progress and benefit from studying the work of professional designers when they analyse the quality of design in everyday products. In textiles, students are highly creative and produce original and good quality products using fabrics.

BUSINESS

220. The focus was on AVCE business education but lessons in economics were also sampled. In economics, students attained results well above the national average in 2001 with 5 out of 9 students attaining A and B grades. The attainment of Year 13 students is above the national average. Teaching is very good and has excellent pace and energy. Students are well motivated and have very good relationships with their teacher.

221. Overall, the provision for the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Business Education is **very good**.

Strengths

- The teaching is very good
- The lessons are carefully prepared
- The teachers are very knowledgeable in the subject matter
- The students enjoy their work

Areas for improvement.

- The pace in some lessons could be improved

222. The course is a relatively new one for the students so there is only one set of results on which to make statements about standards. Of the five students who took the first part of course in 2001, 100 per cent passed the examination and gained grades in the range of A to E. Although this is a small number on which to base comparisons, these results are above the national average. The standards reached by the current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work are similarly above average. The students are clearly knowledgeable about the major elements of the syllabus and can talk with ease and fluency about a wide range of business topics. These include issues on marketing, finance, business environment and human resources. The quality of their written work is of a similarly high standard. The students are active in contacting businesses by letter and by the internet and they are very aware of the nature of the businesses that are in close proximity to the school. More actual contact with some of these companies, in the form of visits and field trips etc, would be of additional benefit to the students, particularly in helping them to be more familiar with a wider range of business environments. This experience would also help them develop their social skills further. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls on these courses. At present there are no gifted and talented students on the course. Overall the achievement of the students is very good as a significant number achieved better than their predicted grades.

223. The response and attitude of the students to the subject is very good. Clearly they enjoy their work and consequently they work hard both in the classroom and when working independently on their assessment units elsewhere. The students concentrate on the work in hand in the classroom and actively engage themselves in the topics under discussion and investigation. They intelligently question the issues being raised and endeavour mentally to place and visualise them in a real business environment. They are always respectful, both of each other and of the teachers.

224. Overall the teaching is very good. The lessons are carefully planned and the aims and objectives are clear. The teachers are clearly knowledgeable in the subject matter and are able to relate the academic aspects of business issues to the more practical ones. Clearly there is a lot of subject expertise in the department and this is being put to good use and so learning is strong. At times the pace of some lessons could be faster. This would enable more learning to be done in the time available. The less able students would sometimes benefit from the information presented to them in the lesson being repeated in a more simple way. Expectations in terms of the level of work are good and the teachers strive hard to make the students think through the practicalities of what is being taught and discussed. Often the teaching is done with great enthusiasm and style and this clearly keeps the attention of the students and has as a very significant positive impact on the learning.

225. The AVCE business course being taught forms part of the work of the business education department. This department is very well managed and progressive. Monitoring of the teachers in the department occurs on a regular basis, and this includes those who teach the AVCE business units. The documentation within the business education department is wide ranging and includes schemes of work and policies on target setting, special needs, assessment, marking and homework. The documentation also includes a development plan. There is a rising trend of popularity for the AVCE course and the drop out rate is low. Three of the five students in Year 13 have already obtained university places to study business related subjects. Accommodation and resources are very good. About 30 computers are available for the business studies students and these are actively used. No issues were raised at the last inspection. The department makes a significant contribution to numeracy, for example, in its study of finance and elements of statistics.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

226. The focus was on Information and communication technology

227. Overall, the provision for A and AS level students is **good**. There is limited access to ICT resources for sixth form students.

Strengths

- The results in GCE Advanced Level examinations are consistently above national averages
- Teaching is very good

Areas for improvement

- The lack of adequate access for sixth form students to information technology facilities
- Links with local industry to share industrial and commercial practice

228. In Years 12 and 13 the school offers AS and A level GCE examination courses. Over the last few years results have varied between being in line and above national figures. These results have been achieved by good numbers of students as groups are invariably large.

Standards in current Year 12 and 13 classes are above average. Students are acquiring good levels of knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their practical projects are well conducted and cover a wide and challenging range of IT systems. They have good working knowledge of a range of industry standard software. Though system designs often closely match real IT systems there is very little input from outside users and none from IT specialists in local industry and commerce. Their input would provide the department with a useful source of practical knowledge.

229. Teaching is very good in the A and AS level examination courses. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they effectively share with students. They do this through marking and individual feedback and also through the support and guidance offered on the school's web site. This is a valuable resource that gives access for students at any time, in school and out, to a very good range of helpful information. This enriches students' learning by providing them with information sources that they can tap independently. In lessons teachers make sure that the aims and objectives of lessons are shared. Courses are well planned and there is clear direction to learning. There is always a very good level of challenge such as in class discussions where teachers use questioning well to draw extended responses from students. Teachers support writing well, providing guidelines that are demanding and which help to give enhanced structure and depth to tasks. The confidence teachers foster in students has led to a very good range and variety of projects being attempted. Teachers give students the confidence to explore topics while always being on hand to redirect efforts when it proves necessary. This results in a very good climate for learning as students find the subject stimulating. Relationships are very good between students and teachers and this leads to a very good dialogue which advances learning very well.

230. The very good leadership and management of the subject contribute directly to the good results attained by a good number of students. Take up for this course is always good and results compare most favourably with those in other subjects in the school. The curriculum leader has a very good knowledge of what is happening in the department through the use of free periods to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

231. Though students following A and AS level courses can usually negotiate access to computers in their study time, there is limited access for sixth form students, overall, and many have to rely on home computers to complete coursework and for research using the Internet. This inhibits the development of independent learning skills.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

232. The inspection focus was on leisure and tourism and physical education.

Leisure and Tourism

233. Overall the provision for intermediate leisure and tourism is **very good**

Strengths

- Consistently very good teaching that supports the development of independent learning.
- In depth written and verbal evaluation of students' work giving them constructive feedback towards improvement.
- Very supportive relationships.
- The number and variety of visits.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work documented to show the school's approach.
- More emphasis on students' development of literacy skills.
- More computers in the teaching base.

234. In 1999 and 2000, students were entered for advanced level GNVQ. Very few students took the courses and a distinction and two merits were attained. In 2001, two boys entered the intermediate level examination and both passed. All students over previous years have attained results well above those expected and their achievement has been very good.

235. The standards reached by current students in Year 12, as seen in lessons and in their written assignments, are in line with pass requirements. This represents very good achievement in relation to their GCSE results and students are doing much better than expected. Results of the two tested units indicate that most students are working at pass standard with two students above this level. Students are developing a good range of knowledge about tourism, culture and heritage through their investigations for their final two assignments. When discussing their visit to the Lake District, students' responses were lively, accurate and well thought out. All students know how to obtain evidence from a variety of sources to meet the criteria for the units. Students use and understanding of ICT is very good. ICT is an integral part of the course and students use it independently to research information and to present their assignments. Students often lack confidence in their knowledge and ability to present their findings accurately. They are easily daunted by some of the requirements, especially when they can not find the appropriate evidence easily. However, students' attitudes and work indicate a clear improvement over the year's course.

236. Teaching was very good in all lessons observed. Teachers are well qualified for this vocational course. They undertake regular training for their roles of external moderator and examiner in the subject. This leads to students receiving very good quality guidance when planning their work to meet the required criteria. Lesson objectives are outlined at the start of each week and each lesson so that all students know what they are expected to do. Teachers set time targets and give students good starting points through a range of resources to help them put their work together. Evidence from completed assignments shows that teachers give detailed and informed comments, after the students have initially submitted their work. All students benefit from this thorough and evaluative marking because there are clear indications of the provisional grade awarded and what is needed to meet the unit criteria. Teachers take time to give feedback to all students individually.

237. Many visits are organised and these extend the students' thinking beyond the local area and culture and bring real examples to their learning. Students also experience a two week induction course and one week at a work placement. The booklets which support these activities are very well focused.

238. The induction and visits are very effective in raising standards because they provide students with a good base for their learning. Very good relationships have developed through the independent nature of the learning and students support one another well and are also very well supported by their teachers. Although good identification is made of subject specific vocabulary, teachers do not always give sufficient opportunities for students to use these key words in discussion.

239. The majority of students are keen, hardworking and determined. They concentrate well when working on their own and are comfortable with the independent ethos of the course. However, one student has been absent regularly this term and this reflects an unsatisfactory response to the course. The teachers have made every effort to help and encourage him. Students really appreciate the amount of time and help given to them by their teachers. Present students are mostly taking the course because they need to resit their English and mathematics GCSE examinations, but two boys in the group are interested in the leisure industry as a career and wish to pursue further courses next year. This

intermediate course is very well suited to the needs of the present students but the curriculum, at present, provides no continuity for those students who wish to progress from this course to the advanced level vocational certificate (AVCE) in leisure/travel and tourism.

240. The subject is very well led and managed. The two teachers meet regularly and work well as a team to inform and co-ordinate the running of the department. There are insufficient ICT resources in the teaching base. The accommodation is good and allows for work to be displayed and students to undertake independent study when not in formal lessons. The monitoring of students' progress is very good and the displayed assignment results interest and motivate the students. The department handbook is comprehensive with many written aids to help students organise their learning, for example, time management sheets. However, the schemes of work have not been adapted to indicate the school's initiatives, visits, resources and teaching approaches.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

241. Overall, the quality of provision for physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Results are above the national average.
- Teaching is good.
- Student management is very good.

Areas for improvement.

- Introduce the Community Sports Leaders Award.
- Timetable physical education for non-examination students.
- Encourage students to read more widely around the subject.

242. In July 1999 the department began offering an A level examination in physical education to a small group of sixth form students. All the students who took the examination in July 2001 gained pass grades, with the number gaining the higher A-B grades being higher than that gained nationally. Also in July 2001 the first group of students taking the newly introduced AS level all gained pass grades, and, as with the A level students, the number of students gaining the higher A to B grades was again better than the national average. Although there were more boys than girls taking these examinations there was no significant difference in their levels of attainment.

243. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are above the national average and reflect their AS level results. Teachers adopt a challenging and positive approach to their work which enables students to use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Work folders are very well organised and show that the demands of the syllabus are being met. Students write at length on a variety of topics such as drug abuse in sport, the effects of sponsorship, and the psychological factors affecting sporting performance. Students are able to ask perceptive questions of the teachers using appropriate technical language. Most display a range of good discussion skills as they discuss, argue and defend viewpoints. Students were observed taking part in a debate on the importance of the psychological aspects on sporting performances. Clear views were argued vigorously, challenged and defended. Many of the students use their information and technology skills to produce high quality extended essays and course work folders, and to access the internet to broaden their knowledge and to research topics.

244. All students in Year 12 have made good progress since they started the course in September 2001 and are achieving well. In lessons, students work conscientiously, are attentive and concentrate well. They show real rapport with their teachers and relationships, when working in groups, is very good. Students were observed discussing their extended essays on a health related fitness training programmes. They argued clearly and justified their views and opinions that were informed by some reading around the topic. However, most students do not read widely enough and rely on support material put together by their teachers. In spite of this, all students use their knowledge to write evaluative, well-argued essays. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and as a consequence, they have equally high expectations of themselves. Students' attitude to learning is very good. They behave well, are well motivated, and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationships between teachers and students is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally.

245. The teaching is of high quality and has a significant impact on students' achievement. Enthusiasm for the subject and wide subject knowledge enable staff to interest and motivate students. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which students learn, and they work hard to use methods and to provide them with resources to meet their needs. Teachers' marking is thorough and includes detailed comments designed to ensure that progress is made. Students have a clear idea of the quality of their work and how to improve.

246. The department is very well managed with a clear sense of direction and purpose. Planning and documentation is very good and help in the effective delivery of the subject. The department needs a permanent base with enough suitable accommodation to ensure that students are taught in an appropriate learning environment. The department should now investigate giving sixth form students the opportunity to take the Community Sports Leader Award. It might also investigate the possibility of allowing sixth form students who are not taking an examination in the subject some time on their timetable to take part in physical education activities.

Health and Social Care

247. There were no subjects offered in this curriculum area

Visual and Performing Arts and Media

248. The focus was on art but lessons in drama, media studies and music were also sampled.

249. Two sixth form music lessons were observed. The number of students taking music is too small for valid comparisons. Only three students were seen and standards varied between them and also between the same student's different areas of study. Recent examination results show students generally achieving C-D grades and current standards of work seen are average. The quality of teaching is very good. The small numbers allow for a very high level of individual attention, which is well supported by very good relationships between staff and students. Overall the quality of provision is very good.

250. In drama, results were average in 2001. Students gained grades expected on the basis of prior attainment. In the two lessons observed teaching was good. Students are highly motivated and make good progress. Students now in Year 13 achieve very high standards of performance.

251. In media studies, students following the AS level course are attaining average standards. In the one lesson seen teaching was good. Students show good levels of

interest and are making good progress. AS level results in 2001 were below average and no candidates were examined at advanced level.

Art and Design.

252. Overall, the provision for art and design in the sixth form is **very good**.

Strengths.

- The very good quality of teaching and in the management of students.
- The students' very good attitudes and relationships.
- The very good development of students' personal and learning skills.

Areas for improvement.

- The use of ICT in art and design.
- To attract higher attaining students to the advanced level courses.

253. The department offers art and design courses at Advanced GCSE and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE). Both involve small groups and a few students are taking both examinations.

254. The standards attained in art and design by students in Years 12 and 13 are below average.

255. Attainment in advanced level examinations in 2001 was well below the national average though this represents a satisfactory level of achievement when considering that the standard of attainment for these students was well below average at GCSE.

256. On the A level course all students demonstrate competent drawing and painting skills. In reviewing their projects, higher attaining students show a very good progression of thought and exploration of ideas supported by extensive sketch book work. Artists' influences are incorporated into their work very well without overwhelming their own ideas and themes. Lower attaining students make fewer references to artists' works and, although producing a good body of work, they do not move far from their original ideas. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall and excellent in one quarter of the lessons seen. Relationships among the students and with the teachers are mutually supportive when listening to and commenting on ideas and artwork. Students on the AVCE course are very conscientious and well organised in their recording of a wide range of activities. They co-operate well in planning projects and clearly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with a working textile artist.

257. The quality of teaching is very good at this level. In listening to students presenting their work one teacher made excellent interventions that extended the students' explanations and introduced a more precise and descriptive vocabulary. Lessons in the AVCE course are very well planned with a very good pace and structure. They are very well pitched at students' abilities and reinforced with very good individual guidance giving all students the opportunity to succeed. In all areas the very good relationships between students and teachers allow for the easy flow of discussions and a receptiveness to new ideas.

258. Procedures for the assessment of art and design in the sixth form are very good. Teachers know the strengths, weaknesses and capabilities of individual students very well and are able to give very good individual guidance. The ongoing evaluations of work are very effective in developing students' self evaluating skills and completed project evaluations are highlighted on examination criteria sheets to aid target setting.

259. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department sets a very clear educational direction with care and concern to get the best from individual students. The co-ordination of the AVCE course has been very effectively delegated to another member of the department who has worked well to establish the course. The use of ICT in sixth form art and design is underdeveloped. There are insufficient facilities within the department to develop or teach ICT skills. Students often use computers at home or in school to carry out research on the internet and to word process their findings. The teachers' own skills in ICT are in the early stages of development and are currently inadequate to set appropriate standards and examples for the students.

260. The accommodation and resources for art and design are good. There are good work spaces but they are not suited and students taking AVCE are working in three separate bases each week. Resources are good overall. There are very good supplies of basic materials and equipment but insufficient resources for ICT. One of the teaching bases does not have internet connection.

261. Improvement since the last inspection in sixth form art and design is satisfactory. The AVCE course has been introduced, extending the options available to students, and there has been a change in the A level examination board to one which more closely meets the aptitudes of the students. Variations in examination results over the years are not significant due to the small numbers involved.

HUMANITIES

262. The focus was on psychology but lessons in geography, history and government and politics were also sampled.

263. The provision for politics is very good. Students attain high standards in lessons and well above average examination results. They are taught very well and are left in no doubt about the process of government. The quality of learning is high and students are well motivated and enjoy the subject.

264. The provision for history is good. Students achieve an above average number of higher grades in the A level examinations. This is due to the very high quality of teaching by subject specialists. The department is strongly led and well managed, with very good use of computers to support learning and independent research.

265. Two lessons of geography were sampled. Students are achieving well in the subject. In 2001 GCE Advanced level results were above the national average. Attainment of students in Years 12 and 13 is good with students showing depth of knowledge and understanding. Teachers are well qualified and use challenging tasks to provide students with a variety of learning opportunities. Overall the quality of provision is good.

PSYCHOLOGY

266. Overall, the quality of provision for psychology is **very good**.

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- The subject is led and managed very well.
- Students' results in A level psychology are very good.
- Students achieve very well.
- Teachers care for their students.

Areas for improvement

- To continue to develop the good practice of student performance monitoring by setting individual student targets.

267. The proportions of students obtaining A-B grades and A-E grades for the 2001 'A' level examinations were well above the national average. The results have been well above the national average for the last 3 years and show a rising trend of improvement. Students are generally achieving higher grades than would be expected based upon their GCSE performance.

268. The standard of work seen in lessons and in files is very good. Students are able to carry out effective evaluation of studies in terms of how reliable and valid they are. They can describe the developmental and cultural factors affecting educational performance. They are able to discuss controversial topics such as multiple personality disorder with a high level of maturity based upon a secure knowledge of psychological perspectives. The standard of work seen matches the standard students achieve in examinations.

269. The quality of teaching is very good. Very good teaching was characterised by the teacher continually involving students in discussion enabling them to take ownership of the topic and probing their depth of understanding. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on introducing the concept of special educational needs, students were first of all asked for their views on the topic and encouraged to discuss them before the teacher expanded on the concepts. This resulted in students being well motivated and learning the key issues surrounding the topic very well. In a lesson on multiple personality disorder a similar strategy was employed that resulted in students acquiring a very good grasp of the topic. Teachers set very high expectations for the students, establish very good relationships with them and create a very safe environment in which they can express themselves freely. The progress of students is monitored well and good feedback is given to them from marked assignments. Students are tested on a regular basis and very good records of student performance are kept together with their expected A level grades based upon GCSE performance. Although students know the grade level that is expected of them, they do not have formalised system of individual subject specific targets in place.

270. Students thoroughly enjoy psychology and learn well both in class and in their own private study demonstrating good levels of independent learning. They have high levels of interest and appreciate good teaching and they demonstrate respect for the teacher and for each other. They develop moral and social skills well when discussing issues which involve a moral dimension such as the morality of the use of psychometric test results as the sole evidence upon which to base social policy.

271. Psychology is very well led and managed by the teacher in charge. She ensures that clear guidance is available for colleagues on a daily basis and through the departmental handbook and encourages their professional development. A committed team of teachers supports the teacher in charge of psychology who are dedicated to giving students the positive learning experiences that allow them to reach their full potential in this subject. The department has good resources and adequate accommodation. Since the last inspection A level results have improved each year and student numbers have continued to rise.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

272. The focus was on English literature but English language, French and German were sampled. In French and German, examination results were average in 2001, and were in line with the abilities of the students. Attainment of students in Years 12 and 13 is average, with some students attaining higher grades in the AS level examinations. Teaching is good. Students are keen to learn and make good progress. Overall the quality of provision is good.

English language

273. Results were average at both Advanced subsidiary and Advanced levels in 2001. The proportion gaining the higher grades A and B was below average. Teaching is good and students are developing good levels of knowledge and understanding. The writing of some students lacks clarity and precision.

English literature.

274. Overall, the quality of provision for English Literature is **good**.

Strengths.

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Positive relationships between students and with teachers.
- Students' confidence and skill in reaching well - argued judgements.
- Positive attitudes to challenging work.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the writing skills of some students.

275. Results at Advanced level have consistently matched national averages in recent years. The proportion gaining the higher grades, A and B, in 2001 was below average whereas in previous years it was consistently above average. At A/S level in 2001, students gained grades which matched and sometimes exceeded expectation based upon earlier attainment. Almost all elected to continue to Advanced level.

276. Students in Year 12 are meeting the demands of the course and general levels of attainment are satisfactory. Students demonstrate good understanding of characters in 'Death of a Salesman.' They were confident and articulate in suggesting how set design might contribute to successful performance of the play. They are becoming skilful in supporting their opinions by reference to the text and use time efficiently when working in groups. Students listen carefully to advice on writing relevantly and concisely. The work of some is written in too loose a style and needs greater precision of expression. Students are confident in using printed and electronic text to widen their understanding.

277. Students in Year 13 are attaining good standards. When working on extracts from modern writers not previously encountered and when revising earlier work on 'Measure for Measure' they show good skills of textual analysis. They quickly recognise significant detail

and implication and make good use of evidence to reach well - argued conclusions. The quality of group work is a strength. Students are also confident in making independent judgements. The more assertive show that they value the contributions of colleagues. The quality of writing is mostly clear, relevant and well organised although some falls below this level.

278. In lessons seen, students demonstrated very good, and in one case excellent, attitudes to their work. They work hard and clearly benefit from the relationships they have with each other and with teachers. These factors ensure good progress in lessons and over time.

279. The quality of teaching is good and often is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the texts being studied and very good understanding of how success is gained at this level which they pass on to students. Students value the quality of the advice and support they receive. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and conduct them at a brisk pace. They have high expectations of students' achievements and are rigorous in demanding deeper exploration and full explanation of students' responses. Their personal enthusiasm for literature adds to the quality of students' learning.