

INSPECTION REPORT

SECTION 1

KESTEVEN AND SLEAFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Sleaford

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120633

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Ross

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 4th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 189789

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

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The full inspections of Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School were carried out at the same time so that a full inspection of their joint sixth form with St George's College of Technology could also take place. This report is published in two sections: the first for Kesteven and Sleaford Main School and the second for the joint sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Selective
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Female
School address:	Jermyn Street Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7RS
Telephone number:	01529 414044
Fax number:	01529 414928
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Janet Flett
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	ML Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
25743	P Butler	Team inspector	Science	
27954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
11838	D Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
20639	R Grant	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23324	S Greenland	Team inspector	History	
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education	
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology	
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
4146	R Kent	Team inspector	English	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30978	E White	Team inspector	Geography	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire WS7 8XA

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SECTION 1

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a popular, selective school for girls serving Sleaford, a rapidly expanding town in Lincolnshire, and surrounding villages. With 773 on roll, 174 in the sixth form, the school is smaller than most secondary schools. The roll has grown by nearly a third since the last inspection, and more than three times as many pupils stay on into the sixth form. The school is an Investor in People and has received recognition through Chartermark, Artsmark, Sportsmark and a School Achievement Award. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, overall from broadly average circumstances. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority families and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special needs is low, with one pupil at the highest level; pupils' needs include physical impairment, autism and dyslexia. On entry to Year 7, pupils' attainment is well above average, although the range of attainment on entry is wider than in many selective schools.

The school participates in a joint sixth form arrangement with two local schools, Carre's Grammar School for Boys and St George's College of Technology, a mixed non-selective school. The report on the joint sixth form is Section 2 of this document.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, led and managed well and providing satisfactory value for money; good teaching together with pupils' very good attitudes ensures that the high standards on entry are maintained by Year 11 and that pupils' overall achievement is good.

What the school does well

- Above average standards sustained
- Pupils' very good attitudes, enthusiasm and initiative
- Very good pastoral care for pupils
- Day-to-day life strongly underpinned by school aims
- Teachers' very good subject expertise
- Extensive and imaginative range of out-of-hours activities.

What could be improved

- The highest attainers do not always reach the standards they should
- Not enough use made of the information learned from assessments to ensure that work is suitably challenging for all pupils
- Pupils' annual reports often lacking in clear information about their strengths and areas for improvement
- Scope for strengthening subject planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1996 improvement has been good. High standards have been maintained and achievement is now good. Teaching is still nearly always satisfactory or better, while there is significant improvement in the amount of very good teaching. Good improvement has been made in development planning, departmental management and in library stock.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

- High standards are being maintained at GCSE and in Year 9, and the points scores for both are rising faster than the national rate
- The A* comparison (table above) means that results are in the highest 5 per cent nationally
- For the Year 11 group taking GCSE in 2001, the similar schools comparison refers to those schools nationally whose Year 9 test points were in the same band as Kesteven and Sleaford High School's test points – the highest band; the schools' results in comparison with the results in those schools are average, representing satisfactory achievement.
- GCSE targets for 2001 were met for 5 or more A*-C and A*-G grades; the target for average points scores was marginally exceeded; each target is challenging for 2002.
- In all subjects except sports studies, GCSE results in 2001 were significantly above average.
- Year 9 test results were in the highest 5 per cent nationally over the three years 1999-2001 (A*), showing a good gain from pupils' standards when they join Year 7.
- Strengths in the work seen are the very high standards in art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education by Year 11.
- Pupils' achievement overall is good over both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11; it is very good overall in art and design, by Year 9 in English and by Year 11 in religious education.
- Standards in modern languages by Year 9 are average and pupils' achievement is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils are keen to learn and enjoy their work; they listen and concentrate well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils know what is expected and usually manage themselves well.
Personal development and relationships	Good: relationships are a general strength, although, round the school, some lack of thoughtfulness for others is sometimes shown.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall in mathematics and science, and very good in English.
- The quality of both is consistently good in nearly all other subjects, while very good in art and design, design and technology, history and music, and in Years 10 and 11, in religious education.
- The teaching and learning in geography, and in modern languages in Years 7 to 9, is satisfactory.
- Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good overall.
- Overall, pupils' learning needs are met well by the teaching, with strengths in English, art and design, design and technology, history, music, religious education, and for pupils with special needs.
- In English, pupils' pace of learning, their productivity and independence are excellent; in Years 10 and 11, pupils put excellent effort into their learning in religious education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall: good range overall and in ICT; unsatisfactory for physical education in Years 7 to 9 because the low time allocation has an adverse effect on pupils' learning. Out-of-hours activities are a strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities and visits.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: very good for social development and good for moral development; otherwise satisfactory; subject planning for these areas of pupils' development is not firmly established. There are many rich opportunities for corporate experiences in the life of the school, some organised by the pupils, such as the fashion show during the inspection week.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: very good procedures concerning behaviour, anti-bullying and for supporting personal development; information from pupils' assessments is not always used sufficiently to guide planning; risk assessment is carried out as required but practice is not evaluated rigorously enough.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good: parents hold the school in very high regard; the annual reports they receive are not always clear enough about their children's strengths and the areas needing improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: strong lead from the headteacher and strength in the reflection of school aims in the day-to-day work of the school; almost all aspects of the school's management are put into effect well by senior staff and department leaders.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall: generally good, thoughtful and committed attention to High School matters, except for compliance regarding worship and the full contents of the annual report to parents. However, there is a lack of joint arrangements for the governing bodies of the three schools participating in the joint sixth form to carry out their responsibilities for the quality of education in Years 12 and 13.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: supported by good monitoring of teaching in the majority of subjects; there is a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses which provides the basis for development planning.
The strategic use of resources	Good staffing and learning resources; satisfactory accommodation overall; the resources are used well to bring about improvements of quality. Good attention to best value.

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 like school • Children make good progress • Behaviour is good • The teaching is good • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem • Children are expected to achieve their best • The school is well led and managed • Children are helped to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework arrangements being consistent across subjects • Clearer information about children's progress • Closer working with parents • The range of activities outside lessons

All the points listed in the left column above received an extremely positive response from parents. Those in the right column received a slightly less positive response although still a very good one. Parents hold the school in very high regard. Inspectors agree with most of these views except those about activities outside lessons. They find the range of activities and take-up to be a considerable strength of the school.

SECTION 1

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Over Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievement is good. When they join Year 7, pupils' standards are well above average (A) as measured by their Year 6 results. Over Years 7, 8 and 9, the established good quality of teaching, pupils' very good attitudes and the mostly good quality of curriculum planning help pupils to make enough progress to raise their standards to be in the top five per cent of schools (A*) as measured by Year 9 tests. This is a good achievement. In the work seen during the inspection, overall standards by Year 9 are well above average taking all subjects together, reflecting the general standard on entry. This is true in the majority of individual subjects. The standards seen in mathematics, science, art and design and physical education are above average. In art and design and physical education, pupils are helped to build on their previous, very varied experiences. They do so very well in art and design and well in physical education. Their achievement is less good in physical education because the amount of curriculum time allocated to the subject is too low. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in modern languages, a 'new' curriculum subject from Year 7, and they reach an average standard by Year 9. This reflects the quality of teaching in the subject which overall is satisfactory. In mathematics and science, the standards observed in the current Year 9 are average and pupils achieve well over Years 7 to 9.

2. Achievement overall is good over Years 10 and 11. This judgement balances pupils' achievement in the work seen, the trend in results and the comparison of the school's results with those in similar schools nationally. As measured by results at Year 9 and Year 11, the gain (value added) from National Curriculum tests to GCSE is satisfactory. Results in the top five per cent nationally are sustained and within this band of results, the school's results continue their recent steady rise, which is faster than the national rate. In the work seen over Years 10 and 11, the picture shows better achievement than this. In the majority of subjects, pupils' achievement is good. In science, art and design, ICT, modern languages and religious education, pupils make enough progress to improve on their standard at Year 9. A main reason in science, art and design and religious education is teachers' very good subject knowledge, which is excellent in religious education. Teachers' good subject knowledge of their subject supports this improvement in ICT and modern languages. Well above average standards and good achievement are maintained from Year 9 to Year 11.

3. Pupils with special needs make progress in all subjects at the same rate as other pupils and are equally successful in public examinations. Gifted and talented pupils are fully stretched in the top teaching groups in most subjects and achieve very high GCSE grades. In the work seen, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the work set. This is a possible reason for the satisfactory, rather than good gain between Year 9 tests and GCSE results.

4. There is a buzz in the school about making improvements, led by the enthusiasm and high expectations of the headteacher and many subject managers. The focus on the quality of teaching is at the centre of this and is reaping benefits for pupils' achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually very good and on occasion excellent. This is expected by the school. Relationships are good. These have a positive effect on the high standards achieved. For example in English, pupils are quickly able to form small groups, organise a spokesperson and collaborate on the task with no fuss. The school is a harmonious community in which adults and pupils respond to each other with respect, concern and humour. Coats and bags are hung neatly in cloakrooms; litter is minimal. Pupils are polite to visitors, friendly to one another and go out of their way to take visitors to their destination. Pupils and parents speak highly of the happy, supportive atmosphere in the school.

6. Pupils have very good attitudes towards learning. This is true for all groups, including pupils from ethnic minorities and pupils with special needs. In lessons, pupils show an interest in the tasks set, listen and concentrate well; they are keen to learn. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson based on a modern day detective story, pupils worked very well together to interpret evidence to discover if William Rufus was murdered. They discussed the evidence, considered the options and agreed on a conclusion.

7. However, there are times when some pupils display a lack of understanding of the beliefs of others. For example, in a whole-school assembly on Islam where differences in dress were explored and in a lesson considering the various forms that bullying can take, pupils found it difficult to respond appropriately to the messages being conveyed. Pupils show a sense of self-confidence and assurance, although on occasion accompanied by a lack of regard for those around them. A significant minority fails to show common courtesy to other pupils, for example, through holding doors open for each other.

8. This is in direct contrast to the consideration shown by pupils for the needs of others in the wider community, that is encouraged by the school. For example, each house regularly organises events to raise funds for different charities; pupils have collaborated with the local boys school to fill Aqua Boxes ready to be flown to disaster relief areas around the world; local senior citizens join the pupils for lunch each week. There are many opportunities for pupils to organise and make decisions about their own learning and other aspects of school life, to which they respond very well. Examples of pupils and sixth-form students taking on roles of responsibility are numerous. The school council and prefect system play their part in helping to develop mature and responsible citizens.

9. The level of attendance is very good. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average and the overall rate is well above the national figure.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. The quality of teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons, the proportion maintained since the last inspection. In the majority of lessons, 83 per cent, teaching is good or better. Generally good teaching was reported last time. However, there has been significant improvement in the proportion of lessons judged to be very good or better, now 47 per cent, then 17 per cent. Six excellent lessons are included in this figure, in English, drama, and religious education. In all subjects some very good teaching was seen. The quality is always at least satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, where an unsatisfactory lesson was seen in each year, the proportion of very good teaching increases year by year. The three unsatisfactory lessons were seen in geography, French and personal and social education.

11. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in English, art and design, design and technology, history and music. In religious education the quality improves from good in Years 7 to 9 to very good in Years 10 and 11. In modern languages the quality improves from satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 to good in Years 10 and 11. Geography teaching and learning are satisfactory, and in the remaining subjects, they are good. Basic skills are taught well, with particular strengths in history

12. For pupils with special needs the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are fully informed about specific needs and the targets on pupils individual education plans. The learning support assistant works closely with teachers and provides very effective help. Where necessary, pupils have the appropriate equipment provided for them. Gifted and talented pupils receive work suited to their abilities, are generally in the higher teaching groups, and suitably challenged. In design and technology, they benefit from being given appropriate extension work.

13. The best teaching shows in the following features which were observed in slightly differing combinations in lessons:

- Very speedy, attention-grabbing introductions with immediate effect on pupils' effort.
- Humour used in encouraging independence.
- Last homework featuring in the lesson to provide examples for learning.
- Very clear explanation and systematic use of technical language to assist learning.
- Work marked regularly with constructive comments so that pupils know how they can improve.
- Pupils' confidence in their relationships with teachers enabling them, for example, to challenge the correctness of marking – and have the challenge upheld!
- Support staff for pupils with physical impairment ensure that they are able to make the same amount of progress as others in the class.
- Pupils too interested to switch off.
- Very effective questioning techniques consolidate, probe and extend pupils' understanding, with the degree of challenge adjusted for different abilities.
- Very good use of lesson time, moving through different activities to maintain pupils' interest throughout.
- Opportunities always taken to advance pupils' literacy skills.
- Excellent subject knowledge guides higher attainers to more advanced skills.
- Inspiring methods stimulate a creative response.
- Teachers' high level practical skills provide effective models for pupils.
- A sense of urgency transmitted through countdown at the start and finish of lessons.
- Good interventions to the whole class during independent work help sustain effort and focus.

14. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace of the lesson was slow from the start. For example, too much time was spent copying the title of the work from the board. The planned work was not completed. Pupils carried out relatively unchallenging tasks with half a mind on their conversations, which were not always about their work. The same task was set for all members of the class when different levels of challenge were needed. A slow pace continued throughout the lesson, resulting in lethargic participation by pupils, their full attention never gained, below average attainment and unacceptably varied standards of behaviour. Unsatisfactory preparation by the teacher led to unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour by pupils, unsatisfactory learning and below average standards.

15. These areas needing improvement contributed to some lessons being judged satisfactory rather than good and on a number of occasions, achieving a good, rather than very good standard of teaching. In such lessons, pupils are not always able to make the

progress of which they are capable and this depresses their attainment. For example, learning would have been better in some lessons if the marking had indicated clearly what needed to be done to improve. It would have been better if the learning targets had been clear and focused. There is patchiness in the quality of marking across the school, even though in general, marking is conscientiously carried out. The planning for lessons does not always cater appropriately either for the higher attainers in the group or for the lowest attainers. This is true in groups organised by ability as well as in mixed-ability groups. The resources planned for some lessons do not take sufficient account of the range of ability within groups. Sometimes, the start of the middle phase of the lesson involving individual work is taken as a signal to switch off close concentration and start chatting, because the expectations of the teacher are too low and the work not stimulating enough. Slow starts and a slow pace to some lessons reduce the effort pupils put into their work; in one group this had a marked effect on the work of lower attainers. It sometimes caused time to run out so that the lesson targets were not achieved. Teachers do not always keep a keen enough eye on every pupil, so that, for example, three girls were able to be in class but give little attention to the lesson; their inattention was not noticed. In another lesson, the fact that some pupils were copying rather than making notes from a text was not picked up. On occasion, some immature behaviour and calling out are tolerated which reduces the quality of pupils' contributions. The way teachers on occasion handle wrong answers by ignoring them and passing on to another pupil in search for a right answer is poor. It is an example of exclusion rather than inclusion, doing nothing to advance the understanding of the pupils concerned or of the rest of the class. In one lesson, the teacher made no interventions which advanced pupils' understanding. There are occasions in lessons when teachers misjudge the progress being made in the work and spend too much time on activities which have already achieved their purpose.

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

16. The school's curriculum has satisfactory breadth and balance and meets statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, the teaching week has been increased to twenty-five hours, as suggested in the guidance for schools. The timetable structure has also been improved by providing lessons of one hour for most subjects. Those for drama and personal and social education in Years 7 to 9 are only thirty minutes however. Pupils find the half-hours for drama frustrating.

17. Good learning opportunities are provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9. A strength is the good range of design and technology experiences. Time allocations for geography and history in these years are above average, contributing to the well above average standards in these subjects. In addition to using computers in other subjects, all pupils follow a separately taught ICT course in Years 7 to 9 leading to GCSE. Most follow the short course, but up to a third take the full GCSE. This is good, well-considered provision for able pupils. All pupils are able to study two modern languages in Years 7 to 9. The music curriculum is very good in all years with good time allocation and opportunities for instrumental work. The physical education curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where the low allocation of time restricts pupils' learning.

18. In Years 10 and 11 there is a wide choice of GCSE options, including a specialist ICT course. Provision is good. The school's normal provision in these years is for all pupils to take double science. However, those considering scientific careers have the option of taking the three sciences separately. A small number of pupils who have difficulty in coping with the volume of work in Year 11 are able to take single science. The school has corrected the weakness in the religious education curriculum reported at the last inspection by increasing the time allocation so that the syllabus is adequately covered. A high proportion

of pupils is disappplied from design and technology. This enables them to specialise in areas such as performing arts, modern languages and sciences. However, the school is aware that this level of disapplication from an important subject, particularly for girls, is not an ideal situation; revised arrangements are appropriately being considered.

Personal, social and health education, careers education

19. A good programme is in place for pupils' personal, social and health education that includes sex education and drugs awareness. The helpful set of guidelines and suggested activities available for staff aim to help pupils increase their understanding of issues facing them in society. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught by staff who are confident about teaching this aspect of the curriculum. A recent audit of career resources was carried out and usefully updated. The careers programme is satisfactory. In Year 10, pupils participate in a work experience placement where they begin to appreciate the demands of the workplace.

Pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented

20. There is good provision for pupils with special needs who are fully included in all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities and visits. In some subjects such as design and technology, physical education and science, the school goes to great lengths to provide specially designed equipment to ensure that pupils with physical impairment are not excluded from any part of the curriculum. There is a small programme for gifted and talented pupils, the main feature of which is a two-week summer school. Otherwise, the needs of these pupils are met through the school's curriculum. Pupils who are particularly talented in physical education benefit from extra-curricular activities and good links with local sports clubs.

Extra-curricular activities

21. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good and a school strength. There is an impressive number of clubs including gardening, bee-keeping and cooking with honey, Italian and Japanese. Musical talents are catered for through orchestra, guitar club, choirs and the school production - the current year's was Bugsy Malone for which the pupils wrote their own beginning so that many more could participate in the opening scenes. Sports enthusiasts may opt for team sports, including rugby and football. The school organises overseas trips as far afield as Pompeii and Berlin. A strength of the provision is the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award in which the majority of the pupils in Year 9 participate, pupils in Years 10 and 11 entering the Silver Award and currently 40 pupils in the Joint Sixth Form signed up for the Gold Award. Pupils are encouraged to take part in as many activities during the week as they can. Their attendance is monitored and those that do not participate are identified in performance reviews with the aim of obtaining whole-school participation.

Links

22. The community contributes very well to pupils' learning. Marconi and Cranwell College have strong links with the science department, and Cranwell helps with mock interviews as part of the careers programme. Design and technology pupils have designed the winning logo for a local charity. A variety of local companies supports pupils' work experience and the Young Enterprise scheme. A luncheon club for senior citizens encourages relationships between the generations. The local education authority contributes expertise and funding for sports development.

23. Good links exist with partner-institutions, although these are stronger with primary schools than with higher education institutions. Although some subjects have no curriculum links with primary schools, the geography department has set up a cross-phase project on enquiry learning, together with the two other schools involved in the joint sixth form. The

special needs department liaises on the transfer of pupils. Year 12 students undertake voluntary work in primary schools, listening to reading and assisting teachers, an arrangement initiated by the High School.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

24. Provision for these aspects of pupils' personal development is good overall. In subjects, the provision is at least good in about half the subjects, English, art and design, modern languages, music and physical education and very good in religious education. In other subjects it is satisfactory. Planning for these aspects is not well in place. The evidence suggests that much is taken for granted; the consequence is one of missed opportunities. While the school does not comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of worship, there is a weekly programme of form assemblies and assemblies involving year groups. The planning for these, taking a thematic approach, is suitably detailed and taken seriously. For example, an assembly focusing on the practice in different religious faiths had good potential for developing pupils' understanding and spiritual response. It is the element of worship with which the school does not comply. This is an issue persisting from the last inspection.

25. For spiritual development the provision is satisfactory. In English, pupils are helped to appreciate the beauty in poetic description. Their writing of personal accounts offers good opportunities for reflection on personal experience, shown movingly in an account of a visit to Ypres. In music, pupils experience the joys of performance in different situations, in the concert hall, a cathedral and in the classroom. In religious education, pupils explore religious beliefs and religious art, and write essays on the quality of life. There is a spiritual tone in lessons.

26. Good opportunities are provided for moral development. In science, these opportunities are wide-ranging. For example, pupils consider ethical issues related to the use of pesticides, drug abuse and use of solvents. They explore the moral implications of birth control and the morning-after pill, and cloning. They look at the effects of the combustion of fossil fuels on the environment and global warming. In religious education, they consider the issues surrounding abortion. For physical education, fair play is a central issue and in ICT, pupils learn about the data protection act and its abuse. Rehearsal discipline is a strong moral thread in extra-curricular activities in music and drama. There are good opportunities to study thought-provoking literature in English.

27. The school gives very good attention to social development. A strong sense of community is engendered and many opportunities provided for corporate experiences in assemblies, productions, sports and music 'teams', trips and through occasions such as the lunchtime fashion show organised during the inspection week. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively; lesson activities involve pair- and group-work, for example in modern languages pupils collaborate in survey work. In English, pupils work in pairs to give critical evaluations of each other's work. They take part in activities for the community, for example, taking concerts to local retirement homes, and are very active in fund-raising for charities. The success of the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility was evident in a Year 9 lesson for example, for which the teacher was unavoidably delayed. The pupils started the lesson themselves, organising the activity they were expecting which involved presenting findings to the class.

28. The evidence from the school's documentation is of good opportunities for cultural development. Pupils' experience is enriched through taking part in performing arts activities and through the strength of the influence of visual arts in the school. Pupils go on theatre trips and homestay visits to France. They gain insights into Aboriginal and African art, African singing and the gamelan. In science, they look at diet in different cultures. In

religious education, they visit different places of worship, gurdwara, synagogue and mosque, in their study of world faiths.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. There is very strong ethos of care and encouragement for pupils. This shows in the supportive, encouraging relationships formed between staff and pupils. Child protection procedures are satisfactory.

30. The health and safety policy, including guidance for risk assessments, is good. Two members of staff are recently trained in risk assessment procedure. Risk assessments are carried out as required and governors and staff carry out specific safety checks. However, the record of risk assessments as a whole is not monitored and evaluated to ensure practice is efficient and procedures implemented fully. While some specific issues are identified and persistently followed up, for example the fire alarm system, others do not receive the same level of attention. Difficulties arising from the lack of sufficient toilet facilities are exacerbated by their not containing the basic requirements for health and hygiene such as soap. A disused (listed) greenhouse is in a dilapidated and unsafe state of repair. While action has been taken to tape off the greenhouse, there are no signs warning intruders of the danger. There is a need to ensure that all temporary timetable changes of room are registered centrally.

31. As pupils progress through the school, the pastoral team monitors their personal development very well. Regular checks take place which focus on their academic and social progress and their involvement in extra-curricular activities. Potential difficulties are anticipated and individual support given to ensure that pupils do not fall behind in their studies. This support includes mentoring of younger pupils by Year 12 students.

32. Satisfactory school procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment from their entry into Year 7. Regular checks on individual progress are made in all subjects. Responsibility for the analysis of data from assessments lies with a senior manager who reports back to departments with comments and recommendations for any pupils who are considered not to be making enough progress. The main principles of the school's assessment policy are followed, although a review of policy is overdue. Subject procedures for assessment are satisfactory in English, mathematics, modern languages and music; they are unsatisfactory in physical education and religious education. In other subjects, procedures are good. However, the extent to which the information gained from assessments is used to guide planning varies too much across the school. Although good practice has been established in some departments, overall this is unsatisfactory

33. Assessment procedures for pupils with special needs are good. Annual reviews for those with statements are carried out properly and at the correct time. There is a satisfactory system for collecting information from subject teachers before the review. Parents or carers are invited and all attend. All the requirements on the statements and for individual education plans are fully met. The targets on theses are formulated well, some of them being particularly well-detailed. All subject departments are given a full set; the details are known to all staff and implemented in their teaching.

34. Procedures to achieve good behaviour and tackle the issue of bullying are very good. The constant use of praise and the fact that staff consistently follow school guidance on discipline make a strong contribution to the very good behaviour achieved. A programme of 'challenges' is available to pupils in Years 7 to 9 focused on academic progress, social achievement and service to the community. Striking bronze, silver and gold brooches, designed by the pupils themselves, reward achievement at each level.

35. There are two school councils, one consisting of representatives from Years 7 to 11 and one for sixth-form students only. The councils have a voice on aspects of school development, for example meeting regularly with canteen staff to discuss menus, reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy and advising on changes to the uniform. These opportunities contribute well to their personal development.

36. Regular attendance at school is expected and achieved. Registration procedures are understood and adhered to by staff. The attendance of pupils identified as giving cause for concern is looked at, but there is a lack of formal arrangements for monitoring whole-school attendance to identify any trends or patterns of absence by particular groups of pupils. On an ad hoc basis, pupils' absence is followed up quickly. Overall, procedures are satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents' response to the inspection questionnaire, and the comments at the pre-inspection meeting, show that parents are very positive and supportive of the school. They are appreciative of the level of care and support given by staff and the friendliness of the school. The findings of the inspection confirm these positive views. Parents feel the school brings out the best in each child.

38. The inspection team finds parents' wish to be kept better informed about their children's progress justified to some extent. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory overall. However, not all subject reports clearly tell parents where their children's strengths and weaknesses lie or whether progress is sufficient. The targets set for improvement, a good feature in itself, are sometimes too general for parents to see how they can support their child. The prospectus and governor's annual report to parents are well-presented documents, giving helpful information, although in each some of the required contents are omitted. In contrast, the information available to parents when their child first starts school is of very good quality. A series of helpful booklets tells parents just what they need to know, for example about homework, with friendly introductions from form tutors. Overall, the information provided is good.

39. The school works well with the parents of pupils with special needs. Parents are fully aware of the details of their child's individual education plan, are consulted if it is being considered whether their child should be moved on or off the register, and are invited to annual reviews.

40. Links with parents are good. Both parents and tutors regularly sign pupils' homework diaries. These provide a useful communication tool that enables parents to support their child's work in school. A group of parents regularly assist with costumes and other backstage tasks for the school productions and accompanies pupils on trips. The parent-teacher association is responsible, among other things, for enabling the school to provide free Internet access for all its pupils. A group of parents was involved in the recent review of the school's anti-bullying policy. Parents' involvement is making a very positive contribution to their children's experience in the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. Strong leadership from the headteacher sets a tone of friendly enthusiasm and high expectations that all managers fulfil their responsibilities as required by school policies and procedures. Good attention is currently being given to job descriptions to ensure that they are properly up-to-date. The leadership and management of subjects are good overall, with strengths in science, ICT and religious education; and excellence in art and design. The quality is satisfactory in English and modern languages. However, there is scope for

improvement through reducing the variation in the quality of subject management which currently ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Some areas of senior responsibility are not carried out effectively enough for example, the administration of the timetable and the monitoring of subject provision, a factor in the variable quality of subject management. The monitoring of teaching through lesson observations and sampling pupils' work is carried out well overall; it is good in the majority of subjects, but is unsatisfactory in English. The school's aims, thoughtfully but not succinctly expressed, are generally reflected strongly in its daily life, although not always on corporate occasions such as assemblies. Raising standards is appropriately the main development target, supported by extending the pupil-tracking system in place in Years 7 to 9. The self-evaluation prepared for the inspection is a high quality document, drawing well on evidence from monitoring and analysis.

42. Provision for pupils with special needs is managed well. Accurate records are kept and there is an effective system for communicating with teachers through collecting and distributing information. Individual education plans are of good quality. All statutory requirements are met.

43. In general, the governing body carries out its responsibilities well and thoroughly for the High School. They fulfil statutory requirements except for worship and for the full range of required contents in the prospectus and annual report to parents. Governors are frequently in school and through their own enquiries have a good knowledge of the school's systems and procedures and their effectiveness. However, they are rightly concerned that their similar involvement in and knowledge of the joint sixth form are lacking. They benefit from receiving reports from the head girl and deputy head girl, both of whom attend meetings of the full governing body. These reports include reference to the activities of sixth-formers at the High School. Minutes of the finance committee show very thorough attention to managing the budget, achieving best value and funding the priorities for development. Specific grant monies are used appropriately and effectively for their purpose. The development of the catering facility is an excellent example of imaginative and cost-effective developments achieving high standards and generating income. Income and expenditure per pupil is well above average.

44. The school is well-served by its staff whose subject expertise and commitment to the school contribute strongly to its moving forward. There are good arrangements for performance management in which support staff and catering staff are included. Induction of new staff is good. The vision for the school's development is well-focused and very clear, and shows awareness of the need to work for the highest possible standards. Developments are supported well by the programme of professional development for staff.

45. Accommodation is satisfactory, overall. Most subjects benefit from having sufficient and closely grouped classrooms, which helps organisation and management. In history, refurbishment is having a positive effect on learning, and reflects the school's commitment to improving the school's environment. Several rooms, including the library and some rooms for geography and ICT, are too small and restrict pupils' learning activities. Some science laboratories are under-used because they are not big enough to accommodate whole classes. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory: the space is insufficient for the activities required by the curriculum and for the school's good, large instruments to be used. The general accommodation provided in a separate listed building, while not ideal, has no adverse effects on learning. For physical education, indoor facilities are good, but some aspects of outdoor provision are unsatisfactory where the surface is breaking up. There are insufficient toilets for pupils.

46. Resources to support learning are good. Pupils have their own textbooks which support a range of tasks and independent learning in homework. Other resources,

appropriate to the needs of individual subjects, ensure that the curriculum is successfully taught. The appointment of a new librarian has led to improvements since the previous inspection, with old stock being replaced and computers installed. Book stock for subjects varies in quality. Sixth-formers do not have a dedicated resource area, but have priority access to computers and a quiet corner of the library reserved for them. Resources for the ICT course are good, and interactive whiteboards are currently being installed in each department.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. In order to raise pupils' achievement, the headteacher and the governing body should give priority to the following key issues for action:

- (1) Ensure that the all pupils reach the standards they are capable of achieving through:
 - Strengthening the rigour of lesson observations and the targets set for improvement within departments.
 - Ensuring that teaching quality in departments is consistently achieved across the range of teaching skills.
 - Reporting to all staff and governors on the findings of monitoring.(Paragraphs: 1-3, 14-15, 17, 45, 53, 94, 99, 112-13, 117-18, 125-26, 129-30)
- (2) Use the information learned from assessments to ensure that work is suitably challenging for all pupils through:
 - Strengthening the tracking system in place across the school.
 - Ensuring that information from pupils' assessments and results is routinely used in department monitoring.
 - Providing staff training on planning work suitably for different levels of high attainment.(Paragraphs: 32, 61, 94, 102, 116-17, 123, 129, 137)
- (3) Include clear information for parents about pupils' strengths and areas for improvement in their annual reports through:
 - Implementing a common reporting standard across the school.
 - Establishing procedures for checking that reports meet the standard.(Paragraph: 38)
- (4) Strengthen subject planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through:
 - Establishing school policy for this provision.
 - Implementing procedures for reviewing what departments provide.(Paragraphs: 11, 36-40, 149)

SECTION 1

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	99
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	6	41	36	13	3	0	0
Percentage	6	41	36	13	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	599
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	15

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	0	119	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	118	119	115
	Total	118	119	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (97)	100 (97)	97 (95)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	97 (85)	79 (92)	81 (80)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	117	118	116
	Total	117	118	116
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	100 (100)	99 (97)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	84 (79)	86 (95)	76 (80)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	112	112

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	112	112	112
	Total	112	112	112
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (97)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	63.4 (N/A)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	763
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y 13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	354.25

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y 13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y 11

Key Stage 3	28.8
Key Stage 4	24.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 950 096
Total expenditure	1 904 766
Expenditure per pupil	2 668
Balance brought forward from previous year	97 450
Balance carried forward to next year	142 780

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.9

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	773
Number of questionnaires returned	235

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	41	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	34	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	47	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	49	10	3	1
The teaching is good.	51	44	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	50	10	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	37	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	60	9	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	57	38	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	38	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	42	6	0	9

SECTION 1

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils
- Very good teaching and excellence of teachers' subject knowledge
- Improved standards since the last inspection
- Teachers' high expectations for the standard of work.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum not monitored rigorously
- No agreed policy for marking so that practice varies in quality
- Not enough use of ICT.

48. Standards in the work seen are well above average by Year 11. The quality of teaching is a major factor contributing to pupils' good achievement. Pupils know the text and characters of 'To Kill a Mocking Bird' well. They support their opinions effectively by direct quotations from the text. They have a good knowledge of poetic devices such as *enjambement*, *simile*, *metaphor* and *personification*. Pupils are very confident speakers and listeners. GCSE results are high. All pupils are entered for English and English literature and in 2001, almost all gained the higher grades. Results improved from the previous year, especially at the higher grades.

49. By Year 9 standards are well above average. Pupils' achievement is very good and well-supported by the approaches to the teaching, for example, in the studies of Shakespeare, particularly the analysis of characters. Pupils can compare and contrast the styles of different poets. In narrative writing, they develop characters and settings well and express their ideas in a well-organised way. Their use of vocabulary and grammar allows fine distinctions to be made. Year 9 results are very high. Results have risen over the last three years. Pupils results are better in English than in mathematics and science.

50. Pupils with special needs and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress by Year 9 and Year 11.

51. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They obviously enjoy English lessons and respond eagerly to opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. For example, a Year 9 lesson began with a group of four presenting their version of the Reduced Shakespeare Company's synopsis of 'Macbeth'. The rest of the class listened with courtesy and respect, responding with a spontaneous round of applause to the excellent performance. The recent success of the production of 'Bugsy Malone' is a good example of pupils' willingness to be involved in extra-curricular activities. Relationships are excellent. Pupils' evaluation of each other's work is a very good example of this. In a Year 10 lesson on original writing to create atmosphere, pupils discussed their first draft with a partner and identified areas for improvement.

52. Teaching and learning are very good overall and often excellent. Learning of this quality is achieved when challenging tasks are set to build on pupils' previous best performance. Teachers have high expectations and provide stimulating tasks. For example, in Year 8, a round-the-class activity involved pupils providing synonyms for 'said' for which 29 different words were suggested. Similarly, Year 10 pupils were presented with two descriptions of the same scene that, because of the vocabulary used, produced an entirely different picture. Pupils had to decide which was the most vivid. A Year 11 literature revision test took the form of a quiz requiring answers to questions with a variety of responses. Pupils acknowledged their teachers' high expectations, summing this up with 'teachers really care and make sure that we do our very best, sometimes it's hard'. A key factor in the successful teaching and learning is the excellence of teachers' subject knowledge.

53. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good schemes of work are in place, although the curriculum is not monitored, for example through regular review of teachers' planners or record books. The programme of lesson observations and sampling of work is inadequate to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is equally good across the department. The analysis of pupils' work during the inspection showed that marking is not consistently carried out in Years 7 and 8; this had not been picked up by the department. For example, successive marking of work with the same comment 'Make sure you answer the questions fully' does not provide sufficient advice for pupils on how to improve. In contrast, another pupil, experiencing difficulties with the rules for paragraphing, had been given specific learning targets for improvement, and had achieved this. There is good practice but the subject leader does not make this available to all members of the department. For example in Years 7 to 9, an end-of-unit assessment task had been clearly marked against National Curriculum criteria, with targets set for meeting the requirements of the next level. There are good examples of the use of ICT in pupils' folders; particularly impressive was the Year 7 story-writing competition. Wall-displays in several classrooms show that pupils are skilled in using ICT. However, there are no timetabled English lessons that explicitly focus on the statutory requirements for ICT in English. Pupils have access to the new computers in the library at lunchtimes and after school but, for the most part, they are dependent upon their resources at home. The library is mainly used during the day as a study centre for Year 12 and Year 13 students. Some pupils borrow books for reading for pleasure, for example 'Harry Potter' and 'Lord of the Rings', although pupils generally buy their own copies of books.

54. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen, as has the proportion of higher grades gained by pupils at the end of Year 11. This is a result of the teaching which now shows higher expectations and more challenging tasks. Pupils now engage with the teacher and their peers in critical reflection on their attainment. A major cash infusion has rectified the book shortage and the data from assessments are now used as a guide in the best planning of lessons.

Literacy

55. Good attention is given to literacy skills in most subjects. This is very well done in history and is satisfactory in art and design, French and music. In mathematics, technical vocabulary is used correctly in context, for example *velocity* and *displacement*. In science, in Years 7 to 9, pupils are encouraged to express themselves creatively and there are attractive wall-displays and word-charts in laboratories to support literacy development. Teachers in ICT introduce new technical words in the context of current work so that subject vocabulary is developed effectively over time. 'Key words' are displayed and referred to in lessons. In geography, pupils interrogate the Internet skilfully as a tool for research and are appropriately selective in their use of the material accessed. Pupils speak clearly, confidently and fluently in physical education; their written work is well-organised and clearly expressed, although errors are not corrected regularly.

Drama

56. Excellent drama teaching makes a strong contribution to raising standards. In close collaboration with the English department, work in drama improves pupils' understanding of the theatrical aspects of Shakespeare's plays, for example, appreciating that stage directions, or the lack of them, are often crucial to the plot. Attainment in speaking and listening is strengthened by activities in drama. The opportunity to show initiative and responsibility, an essential aspect of improvisation, contributes well to pupils' personal development. Drama is a popular choice in Years 10 to 11 and the very good new studio has proved to be a worthwhile investment.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Improving results at Year 9 and Year 11
- Good teaching and good relationships
- Pupils' positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough use of ICT
- Literacy planning not always implemented in lessons
- Work not sufficiently planned for different attainment levels.

57. Standards of work by Year 11 are above average. Pupils' work is neat, well-presented and technical vocabulary is used correctly in context, for example the use of *velocity* instead of *speed*, and *displacement* for *distance travelled*. This extends to explanations which pupils can give in lessons. Pupils in a Year 10 statistics lesson were able to discuss the merits of a cumulative frequency step polygon, while pupils in Year 11 were able to explain how the coordinates on a curve would alter the gradient of the curve at that point. The highest attainers in Year 11 already have passed their GCSE in Year 10 with high grades and are studying the additional mathematics GCSE to give them a firm foundation in mathematics for work in AS-level mathematics in Year 12. There has been a steady, but significant increase in the higher grades at GCSE from 1997 until 2000 when there was a slight fall. The GCSE results in 2001 were well above average and continued the trend in improvement.

58. By Year 9, standards are above average. Pupils use and apply mathematics satisfactorily. They have confidence in their mathematical ability and most are able to extend a concept and articulate their thinking. For example, in Year 7, pupils were given a sequence of events which they had to analyse. From these results they were able to deduce an algebraic formula which they could then use to predict future results and explain why and how this happened. Pupils in Year 8 show a clear understanding of the relationship of fractions and decimals and can convert powers of ten into fractions as well as logically explaining why 10^0 was equal to 1. Pupils in Year 9 display fluency in the use of numbers when they use approximation to compete with the teacher in working out complex multiplications in their heads - coming out with an answer close to what it should be. Higher attainers in Year 9 can apply trigonometrical ratios correctly. Year 9 test results have steadily improved over the last few years until 2001, when there was a slight fall.

59. Overall, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. This is true for pupils with special needs and for those who are gifted and talented.

60. Pupils show good attitudes to their work. They are co-operative and enthusiastic, enjoy talking about what they are doing and are prepared to work hard throughout the lessons. They participate well and are anxious to answer questions in class discussions. Pupils in Year 10 were more than willing to explain the intricacies of the factorisation of more complex quadratic equations. Pupils in Year 7 were able to work out for themselves why the exterior angle of a triangle was equal to the two interior opposite angles, by persistently asking questions of the teacher. Their behaviour is usually good and often very good. They are proud of what they are doing and are keen to share their work when asked.

61. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. There is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those involving pupils' independent work. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils, and teachers use humour and praise to good effect in motivating and encouraging pupils. For example, a teacher in a Year 10 class used the comical mispronunciation of a word as a teaching device to extend the mathematical vocabulary of that lesson. Attention to literacy skills is good in some lessons, but is not achieved consistently well across the department. Homework is an integral part of the teaching process and is often used to extend what has been learned in class or prepare for future lessons. For example, homework set for Year 10 helped pupils to make rapid progress through building on the preparation they had done the night before. Teachers have a good awareness of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and they check on individuals throughout the lesson to ensure that they are working to their full potential. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the best examples include constructive comments on how to make improvements. In classes where there are pupils with special needs, the support assistant is aware of what is expected and works well to provide help which encourages success without hindering independence. Pupils' progress is monitored through regular testing, although agreed ways of following this up are not established.

62. The mathematics department is managed well. Despite the fact that the head of mathematics has just returned to work after a long-term absence, the department has continued to work effectively and has made a number of constructive improvements. Two members of the department have acted together to provide leadership and this, with the co-operation of the rest of the department, has permitted the continuation of good mathematics teaching throughout the school. Schemes of work and the department handbook have been updated. Close monitoring of pupils' work and their examination results has prompted changes to the structure of the GCSE course. Pupils now take GCSE mathematics and statistics in Year 11 which has improved the motivation of the pupils in Year 11.

63. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and is reflected by examination results. There is now an effective handbook and comprehensive schemes of work. Pupils' motivation is better in Years 10 and 11.

Numeracy

64. Overall, the standards of numeracy are satisfactory. A draft policy has been developed to integrate the teaching of numeracy into all subjects which the school plans to adopt in the near future. For example, the ICT department has already incorporated numeracy into its schemes of work, although the improvements are not yet evident in lessons. Nonetheless, numeracy in ICT is exemplified in all years by work on spreadsheets. In geography, pupils use numeracy skills for scale measurements of maps, climate graphs and analysis of surveys; analysis of experimental results and their graphical display is carried out in science. Work of a good standard was observed in Year 9 design and technology where pupils were expected to use experimental details to verify Ohm's law. In mathematics, pupils practise their skills regularly and most are confident in their application.

Calculators are used constructively in many mathematics lessons to aid learning. They are often used alongside estimation to improve pupils' facility with numbers.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour
- Good achievement
- Effective monitoring of pupils' performance and target-setting.

Areas for improvement

- Out-of-date facilities in two laboratories
- Unsatisfactory chemical storage.

65. By Year 11, the standard of work seen is well above average and reflects the 2001 examination results. In Year 10, pupils show an impressive level of understanding, for example, in a lesson on electric motors. Year 11 pupils show good understanding of difficult concepts when interpreting energy level diagrams and speak with confidence and accuracy about food production efficiency. The GCSE results for double science in 2001 showed a significant improvement on previous years, particularly in the proportion of higher grades.

66. Standards by Year 9 are above average. Achievement is good. In Year 7, pupils show good scientific ability in the planning and designing of investigations relating to Darwin's work on adaptation. In Year 8, pupils demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding when explaining the process of dissolving. The 2000 Year 9 test results were well above average; they were similar to the mathematics results and well below those in English.

67. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress. The progress of those identified as gifted and talented is good.

68. Attitudes to learning and pupils' behaviour are very good. There is a friendly and supportive working atmosphere in lessons. Year 7 pupils were prepared to take on leadership roles in group work. When carrying out an experiment, all group members co-operated and showed respect for each other. Pupils are very interested in science. Staff employ teaching approaches which build upon and extend their obvious enjoyment of the subject. In all years, pupils settle down to work quickly, maintain concentration and show pride in completing set tasks. The constructive relationships formed between pupils and between pupils and staff are a strength in the department.

69. Teaching and learning are good. The quality does not vary across the year groups. The well-qualified teaching staff are a strength of the department; their high level of expertise and obvious enthusiasm for the subject are a feature of all lessons. Teachers organise and prepare conscientiously, with detailed plans and lesson notes. Pupils are supported in their learning by good handouts and worksheets. A variety of approaches to teaching and learning is used to enable all pupils to learn effectively. Expectations in teaching are now high and appropriate tasks are used to challenge and stretch higher attainers. At the end of lessons, teachers discuss with pupils whether the learning targets have been met, so that pupils can check on their own progress. Assessment processes are now established well so that pupils are aware of the level at which they are working. Targets are set for Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations. Good questioning techniques are used in

lessons. Homework is set regularly and marked with constructive comments to direct pupils' learning. Literacy skills are taught well. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are encouraged to express themselves creatively and there are attractive wall-displays and word-charts in laboratories to support literacy development. Pupils handle data confidently but there is little evidence of numeracy work in the displays. There is not enough use of ICT in lessons. The support given to pupils is a strength: in a mentoring session, a senior pupil effectively used 'mind maps' to revise topics with a lower attaining Year 11 pupil.

70. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department is leading a committed staff in taking the subject forward; there is a clear sense of direction. Teaching is effectively monitored with observations followed by helpful feedback and agreed action points. Professional development is satisfactory to support the department's priorities. The quality of accommodation is variable. Two refurbished laboratories offer opportunities for much better learning than two less flexible, out-dated laboratories. All science rooms are well-maintained and appropriate in terms of size. However, preparation and storage rooms are unsatisfactory; the current arrangements for chemical storage are inadequate. Resources and equipment are satisfactory. There is an appropriate selection of videos to support lessons and the library provides books to support learning. ICT is being developed both in the teaching and learning and for administrative tasks such as handling assessment data. Good use is made of an interactive white board in one laboratory and two lap top projector systems support work in the other rooms. Science classes can be accommodated in the school computer suites on a booking system and use is made of the six computers in the library for group work. The technician support is sufficient and of high quality.

71. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements. GCSE results are significantly better, both in the proportion of pupils gaining top grades and the proportion gaining A*-C grades. Teachers' expectations of standards are now higher across all year groups. The high expectations are supported by improvements in assessment techniques and in the use made of assessment results to help pupils be clear about their progress and to guide future planning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Excellent leadership and management
- Pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour and the very good relationships in the department
- Very high GCSE results.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough opportunities for working with numeracy through art and design.

72. Standards of work seen by Year 11 are very high. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is very good, building very successfully on pupils' previous work. Pupils are very productive and compile a large body of work, including observational studies, experiments with materials and ideas developed in different ways. Strengths in texture, colour and pattern are further enhanced by a greater appreciation of composition. Very good examples of work influenced by African art use these qualities to capture the richness and essence of the culture. Examination results in GCSE have been consistently well above the national averages over recent years, with all candidates achieving the higher grades compared to about three quarters of girls nationally. Significantly, half of the 28 pupils entered in 2001 attained the highest grade.

73. Standards of work seen by Year 9 are above average. This represents very good achievement from a low level of practical skills on entry. Particularly good progress is made in the pupils' ability to use materials flexibly and creatively while developing strong drawing skills.

74. Pupils with special needs and gifted and talented pupils make very good progress, as do all pupils.

75. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are planned and organised very well, whether for brisk class-teaching sessions, as seen in the lessons on portraiture, or to allow for the use of a wide range of materials and processes for experimental work. In Years 7 to 9, pupils frequently work in carefully structured small groups. Lower attainers benefit from the opportunities for discussion and sharing skills while higher attainers develop and extend their ideas. In all year groups there is a strong emphasis on individual guidance that enables pupils of all abilities to make very good progress against personal, achievable targets. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are increasingly involved in negotiating their own targets and setting appropriate deadlines. The teachers' very good depth of knowledge instils confidence in pupils to explore the potential of media and materials. Very effective use is made of the many pictures on display around the room as exemplars or as starting points for further investigations. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. It is less well-structured than literacy teaching, although the estimation and measurement of proportions feature in most work.

76. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory. Its use as an integral creative medium is hindered by the limited and ageing facilities in the department. An effort to include a rotating timetable for Year 9 to incorporate ICT, with specialist teaching in the school's computer suite, has produced work of good quality and given pupils a very useful insight into manipulating images. There has been a negative effect, however, on the routine art and design teaching, due to the breaks in continuity.

77. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. In lesson and at breaks and lunch-times, pupils in all year groups enter the art and design room with an air of enthusiasm and expectation. A very good working atmosphere permeates the department. Year 9 pupils respond well to briskly paced lessons; they set about the short, timed exercises with a sense of urgency. Pupils on the GCSE course manage their time well and take opportunities to reflect upon and refine their work as it progresses. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good, with pupils showing a readiness to seek advice and accept guidance. Significant numbers of pupils choose to work through lunchtimes or join the regular after-school sessions that continue well into the evenings.

78. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department is very knowledgeable and experienced, and has a thorough knowledge of examination requirements and practical processes. She has a clear philosophy for art and design teaching which is reflected in the stimulating environment created in the art and design rooms and around the school. The second teacher in the department is new to the school but is already making a very good contribution to the work of the department. She is supported well by the head of department through observations, advice and team-teaching. A good variety of two- and three-dimensional techniques and processes is employed across the whole age-range, with good progression in the complexity of their use. An extensive and accessible library of art and design books and artefacts enables very secure links to be made with the works of artists.

79. Improvement since last inspection has been very good, with strengths extended and attention given to all relevant areas for improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good provision in Years 7 to 9
- Good teaching and learning in all years
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Limited range of specialisms in Years 10 and 11, although being tackled
- Pupils' limited knowledge and understanding of materials and scientific concepts.

80. In the work seen, standards by Year 11 are well above average in food and textiles. In textiles, pupils design creatively. They show good construction skills when they make garments and other fabric products, and they are skilful in applying surface decoration to fabrics to create special effects. Pupils have very good knowledge of nutrition and techniques for preparing food. This, together with their understanding of consumer needs and wants, enables pupils to plan and prepare appropriate dishes, for example, for vegetarians or diabetics. The highest attaining pupils are adventurous in their planning and include advanced skills for preparing foods. However, their understanding of scientific concepts and the function of ingredients is limited and restricts their ability to describe why things happen when they complete written assignments. Pupils have insufficient knowledge of resistant materials and systems and control because they have had very limited experience of this aspect of the subject in recent years. The curriculum is beginning to improve with the introduction of graphic products in the current year; pupils have reached a satisfactory standard in the short time they have been studying the subject.

81. GCSE examination results reflect the standards observed in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades in food and textiles was well above the national average in 2001. Nine out of ten pupils gained the highest grades. Results in these subjects have been consistently very high in recent years. Provision for resistant materials has been unsatisfactory and no pupils were entered for GCSE in 2001.

82. In work seen, standards by Year 9 are well above average. Pupils use a wide range of hand and machine tools safely and competently, and are able to select appropriate tools and materials. They have a good understanding of the components that make up electronics circuits, for example to detect moisture or to add feature lights to soft toys. They are highly creative in textiles and design and make clothes which reflect modern trends in fashion. Pupils have good practical skills in food technology and understand the nutritional needs of different groups of people, such as children and the elderly. They respond very well to the opportunities to work creatively when they plan food for a celebration. They carry out sensory tests on food they have prepared to analyse the texture, taste and appearance of the products, but have insufficient knowledge of the function of ingredients to evaluate the results in depth.

83. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils enter the school with a limited range of skills in the subject and are introduced to a broad range of activities in all aspects of design and technology. They make particularly good progress in Year 7 in learning to design and to use hand and machine tools which are unfamiliar to them. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 continue to make good progress in food and textiles but make more rapid progress in resistant materials and electronics where they have had limited experience previously. They acquire good skills of gathering and analysing information in support of their projects and learn to design and make original products from fabric, wood and acrylics. Because of varied

previous experience, pupils have not yet learned enough about levers and mechanisms. They are developing good sketching and formal drawing skills to communicate their ideas and make good use of colour and rendering techniques in their three-dimensional drawings. The progress of pupils with special needs is satisfactory.

84. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory. Those pupils identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress. Pupils maintain the well above average standards achieved by Year 9. They build appropriate skills and knowledge in food and textiles, linked to the examination courses they follow. They learn more about industrial processes and apply quality control techniques to the food they produce in school. Pupils learn quickly; they retain information and build on it when they are introduced to new work. They work with a greater degree of independence and increasing maturity in the care they take over their work. Pupils with special needs receive very good assistance and make progress which matches others in the class. Pupils following the short course in graphics are making good progress with drawing skills and communicating information graphically, for example when they study packaging designs and the commercial promotion of products. Pupils make good progress in using computers for research and for presenting information. They make satisfactory progress in using them for designing and for control.

85. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work which contribute significantly to the standards they achieve. They enjoy work in design and technology areas. Behaviour in lessons is very good and there are very good relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils.

86. Teaching and learning are very good; the quality is never less than good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they communicate with enthusiasm. They inspire pupils to be creative when they design products by encouraging originality and praising good design features. Lessons are planned well with clear targets and high expectations which are explained so that pupils work confidently. Teachers have a very good sense of pace in lessons and they match activities and time targets to the needs of pupils. Time is used very well, partly because pupils are keen to learn and also because they are well-managed by teachers. This is particularly evident in lessons where, although a wide variety of activities is taking place, all pupils work productively and safely. New work is very clearly and logically explained, taking good account of what pupils already know, for example, their understanding of mathematical concepts is increased when pupils apply them to practical work in electronics. Teachers use the information from assessments very effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets for improvement. They provide appropriately challenging work for the most able to help them to develop their potential. In some lessons, however, not enough emphasis is placed on teaching about materials and the underlying scientific concepts to give pupils a better understanding of how and why things work. Teachers introduce new technical words in the context of current work so that subject vocabulary is developed over time. Key words are displayed and referred to in lessons. Good emphasis is placed on accurate measuring and calculations in electronics to increase pupils' numeracy skills.

87. The department benefits from good leadership. The newly appointed head of department has taken over a department which was well-led but which taught an unbalanced curriculum. He has already begun to rectify this by restoring appropriate provision for teaching resistant materials. He is providing clear direction for the subject and has an appropriate development plan to support his vision for the future. An unusually high number of pupils has been disapplying from the subject in Years 10 and 11. The department is responding to the need to offer courses which match the needs and wants of pupils more closely. There is a very good spirit of co-operation, with evident mutual respect and sharing of good practice.

88. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Provision for the teaching of resistant materials is better in Years 7 to 9 and provides a more balanced curriculum. Procedures for assessing pupils' work and the use of the resulting information to monitor individual progress and set targets for improvement are significantly better. As a consequence, standards are continuing to rise.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- High standards by the end of Year 11
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge
- Improvements in curriculum planning since the last inspection
- Good attention to the development of pupils' ICT skills.

Areas for improvement

- Sufficient pace in lessons not always sustained
- Assessments not used sufficiently to monitor and compare pupils' progress
- Guidance about how to improve not always clear enough in teachers' written marking comments.

89. By the end of Year 11 standards in the work seen are well above average. On entry to the GCSE course, pupils have well above average attainment and they achieve well over the two years. Pupils' individual studies provide clear evidence that they can use fieldwork techniques well. They can apply their knowledge of urban growth, spheres of influence, population change and traffic problems to the hypotheses posed in their investigations. Increasingly complex issues are taught well so that pupils can justify their stance on topical issues; for example, the causes and possible solutions to global warming, the dilemma of constructing coastal defences which cause greater erosion elsewhere, and China's one-child policy. Pupils with special needs make good progress; those identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress.

90. The average points gained at GCSE are significantly above the national average as are the numbers of pupils attaining the highest grades. However, pupils' ability is also very high and a greater number of pupils could be expected to reach the two highest grades. Even so, attainment in geography compares well with other subjects in the school.

91. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all years and by the end of Year 9 have a very good understanding of physical and human geography. They can describe and explain the reasons for the variations of temperature and rainfall in Britain, including local microclimates, and the characteristics of the major European climates. When studying volcanoes, pupils' written work shows that they are able to describe and give explanations for the processes that are continuously shaping the earth's surface. Pupils are developing a sound understanding of environmental issues from the effects of removing hedgerows in Britain to the impact of the destruction of the rainforest on the world. They can appreciate the problems of people living in the favelas of Brazilian cities. Fieldwork is an integral part of the course and pupils use a variety of fieldwork techniques to gain first-hand evidence of farming and urban environments. Attainment levels are well above the national average in teacher assessments. However, when compared with the high level of pupils' attainment at entry, teacher assessments in 2001 indicate that the number of pupils reaching the highest National Curriculum level at the end of Year 9 should be higher. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The progress of

pupils with special needs is good. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress; they could be challenged more.

92. Pupils' use of ICT is excellent in all years both in lessons, where they work with great confidence and expertise, and in the completion of homework exercises. Pupils interrogate the Internet skilfully as a tool for research and are appropriately selective in their use of the material accessed. The presentation of longer assignments, for example the tourist brochures for Brazil produced by Year 8 and coursework in Years 10 and 11, is greatly enhanced by pupils' use of ICT. Literacy and numeracy standards are good. Pupils write fluently in all contexts, from short responses to structured questions and long written assignments. The application of numeracy to the construction and interpretation of statistics and graphs is good overall.

93. The working atmosphere is always very good. Pupils work with enthusiasm and have a very good rapport with their teachers. They are keen to learn and to extend their knowledge. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute their own first-hand experience of local and distant places to class discussions and as a consequence these are lively and informative. Pupils working collaboratively produce work of a very high standard. For example, Year 11 presentations on global warming were well-informed and gave an accurate account of the issue.

94. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality varies and one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. There is some good and very good teaching where pupils make rapid progress in their learning. In the very good lessons, pupils are actively engaged. For example, they present the results of group research about global warming; they represent the job opportunities generated by government initiatives to establish industrial growth; and they respond with enthusiasm to teachers' questioning. All lessons are planned well. Schemes of work are well-structured and progressively develop pupils' understanding of physical and human geography. Clear objectives for lessons and teachers' high expectations of pupils' attainment and behaviour provide a good framework for learning. The good teaching includes well-planned opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand information on fieldwork visits. It ensures that pupils are able to use geographical skills well, for example, reading grid references, and to represent data in graphs, diagrams and maps. Teachers use a wide range of resources, including pupils' own fieldwork displays to engage pupils' attention and interest. Pupils are prepared well for GCSE examinations because of teachers' wide geographical knowledge and their familiarity with the demands of the examination. Lessons begin briskly, but in some, where individual activities are extended for too long, pupils learn more slowly and their progress is limited. Written work is regularly marked, but comments recorded in exercise books and at the end of assignments are insufficiently detailed. They do not provide enough guidance to pupils on what they should do to improve nor do they address the marking criteria that are given to pupils with the assessment tasks. Comprehensive records provide accurate information of pupils' progress and attainment. However, not enough use is made of the assessments to analyse pupils' performance with reference to their attainment on entry or to compare the performance of pupils of similar ability from one year to another in GCSE examinations.

95. Leadership and management of the department are good. Departmental policies give sound guidance to all staff and schemes of work are planned and documented well. Development priorities are identified and there is a shared commitment to continued improvement. Since the last inspection good progress has been made. Schemes of work now include more opportunity for pupils to apply knowledge, to write for a range of purposes and to engage in independent learning. The opportunities within the geography curriculum for pupils to develop and use their ICT skills are very good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' very good attitudes, very good behaviour and strong intellectual effort
- Very good teaching leading to very good learning
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge widening learning at every opportunity.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment data not used sufficiently to evaluate performance
- Lack of an overview of the schemes of work in Years 10 and 11.

96. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils have a very sophisticated understanding of history and a high proportion is working at the highest level demanded by the examination board. GCSE results are well above average. The proportion gaining the higher grades is well above average, being consistently at or near 100 per cent. In 2001, history results were significantly above those of other subjects in the school.

97. Standards in the work seen by Year 9 are well above average, as are teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 9, pupils can assess the reliability of evidence and arrive at their own interpretations, understanding that many interpretations can be valid. For example in a Year 8 lesson, they arrived at reasoned but opposing viewpoints about the character and motives of Oliver Cromwell. They have learned to research information and to compile their own presentations of their conclusions.

98. Achievement is satisfactory overall by Year 9 and by Year 11, with standards being maintained from entry to the end of Year 11. Teaching strongly emphasises the important skills of critically evaluating and interpreting sources of evidence and pupils have learned to look beneath the surface when examining evidence. For example, in a Year 10 lesson about how the Nazi regime in Germany used the mass media for propaganda, pupils were able to determine which political jokes contained hidden insults to Hitler and which subtly complimented him. Year 7 pupils showed their developing investigation and deduction skills in a lesson determining who was responsible for the death of William Rufus in the Middle Ages, and many found evidence to support the unorthodox view that his death was an unfortunate accident.

99. Pupils with special needs progress as well as their peers because they are well-known to teachers who give them extra attention where needed. Gifted and talented pupils also progress as well as their peers, but in some lessons they are not given sufficiently challenging work to extend their abilities fully. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are well-integrated into their groups.

100. Pupils' attitudes are very good, often excellent. Only one example of over-noisy discussion was seen and this was quickly corrected by the teacher. All pupils are enthusiastic and interested and obviously enjoy their history lessons. This leads them to be attentive learners. Very good relationships result in a very good atmosphere for learning.

101. Across all year groups, teaching and learning are very good, with none that is less than good. Teachers plan very well and their excellent subject knowledge is used effectively to extend pupils' learning, for example giving additional information about the Truman Doctrine when discussing the policy of the United States of America over the spread of communism. Group work and investigations teach pupils to think for themselves and develop personal learning skills. Lessons are well-paced and interest never flags.

Homework is used well to extend learning or prepare for assessments. Marking is up-to-date and guides further learning. ICT is used well for special projects, such as local history studies, and for research on the Internet.

102. Leadership and management are good with extensive documentation in place, although there is no overview of the Year 10 and 11 schemes of work. A small team of dedicated and committed teachers strives to do the best for all pupils. Assessment is regular and planned well. Individual progress is effectively tracked; pupils who are not fulfilling their potential are offered additional teaching. However, collective data is not yet used to track the overall progress of the department.

103. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. National Curriculum levels are now an integral part of assessment procedures. Use of ICT is being developed throughout the curriculum. Weaker examination candidates are offered additional lessons to strengthen their skills. Overall, the department has a very good capacity to improve further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very high results at GCSE and good achievement in all years
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and very good attitudes
- Good teaching, often very good
- Leadership and management securing very good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of opportunities to use computers for measurement and control
- Insufficient provision in some subjects, particularly English, and some inadequate planning in subjects such as science.

104. The pupils currently in Year 11 achieve well. Standards are very high. For example, this is shown by the quality of their analysis of what is needed for tasks such as planning a major wedding celebration at a large country house. This work entailed selecting and using appropriate software tools for elements such as analysing costs and creating maps, seating plans and invitations. In producing a users' guide for anybody using the systems they have designed, pupils show considerable capability in using the word processor, for example in enhancing the quality of information provided with screendumps that replicate the tools and techniques used. GCSE results were very high in 2001. The examination had only previously been taken in 2000, when results were also very high. Since its introduction, the subject has been a popular option, with a significantly higher proportion taking it than in most schools.

105. In 2001, teacher assessments judged the standard of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 as very high. The work of current Year 9 pupils is well above average. As the pupils are achieving well, having entered the school with overall standards in ICT that were above average, they are on target to reach very high standards by the end of the year. In recognition of the high standards achieved, the school enables all pupils to follow a GCSE short course in Years 8 and 9; up to a third take the full course. The majority of Year 9 pupils have completed their coursework. This shows their considerable independence in choosing a range of software to carry out tasks effectively, such as organising customer records for a hair stylist. Pupils show considerable capability in using the software tools chosen to meet the requirements of their tasks; they follow effective procedures and evaluate how well they have been carried out. In lessons where pupils were designing

pages that may be included in the school website, they independently researched and analysed other sites to identify the styles likely to be the most effective.

106. In the specific ICT lessons, pupils' behaviour is excellent and attitudes to the subject are very good. Pupils listen carefully when teachers are explaining tasks; their concentration, effort and pace are very high in individual work. They responsibly discuss their work with the teacher and each other. Almost always, these standards were maintained with a minimum of supervision.

107. Teaching and learning are good in these specific ICT lessons, and often very good. Detailed, time-related plans ensure that the lessons have good structure, continuity and pace. On a small number of occasions, the planning of materials is not so good, for example when pupils were unable to take away a guidance sheet on the criteria for evaluating their work. Teachers explain tasks clearly, so that pupils are clear about what they have to achieve. There is a good balance between practical tasks to practise and improve skills, and theoretical work, often achieved through good homework tasks which help to increase pupils' understanding. When monitoring and guiding individual work, teachers maintain a good balance between giving advice and leaving the responsibility with the pupil to solve problems. They have good awareness of individual needs and ensure that all are included. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, a small number of pupils who had difficulty in keeping up with the generally high pace of work were closely monitored and guided to ensure that they did so successfully. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate software and how well they use it to carry out tasks. Marking often provides guidance on how to improve work.

108. The departmental handbook contains policies for both literacy and numeracy, with activities planned in the scheme of work. This results in good attention to learning and using specialist vocabulary and frequent opportunities for reading from the screen and writing, both in exercise books and with ICT tools such as word processors. The school library has a small number of ICT manuals, but is more useful by virtue of its stock of computers that provide a helpful resource for carrying out individual tasks.

109. The subject-based ICT curriculum is good in all years. A forward-looking approach, that is highly responsive to the standards and needs of its pupils, has led to the introduction of opportunities for all pupils to take GCSE courses in Years 8 and 9 and the possibility of AS-level work in Years 10 and 11. The school has improved the opportunities for pupils to use computers in every subject, particularly in design and technology, history and music, to consolidate and apply what they learn in ICT lessons. In subjects which provide satisfactory overall opportunities, there are some good activities in schemes of work. For example, in Year 8 geography, pupils produced a tourist brochure on Brazil. However, the ICT department recognises that, while the school meets statutory requirements, the ICT curriculum would benefit from improved opportunities in subjects to use computers for controlling other equipment and taking measurements. Some subjects, while just meeting their specific statutory requirements for ICT, do not yet provide strong opportunities. This is particularly so in English and mathematics. While some good opportunities are provided in science, the planning of these needs improvement in order to achieve the maximum value for pupils.

110. The leadership and management of ICT are very good: they have carried the department to a point at which its outcomes are good in all respects, and for many, on the threshold of being very good. An important element is the very good improvement since the last inspection. The unsatisfactory achievement of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been dealt with by improving opportunities to use computers. Monitoring of ICT in subjects is much improved, with regular audits and inclusion of subject-based activities in the ICT

scheme of work. The availability of technical support is now significantly better. The challenge for the school is to ensure that improvements continue as strongly after impending staff changes.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards by Year 9
- Good teaching, some very good in German
- Pupils' positive attitudes contributing to their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 too sketchy
- Pupils not always gaining the highest grades to reflect their ability
- Information from assessment not used to improve planning
- Lack of initiative in leadership and cohesiveness in management in tackling weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

111. Standards in work seen in Year 11 are above average in French and German. Pupils achieve well over Years 10 and 11. The challenge in lessons is much more obvious than in Years 7 to 9, and there is more pace in learning. There is good consolidation of knowledge acquired in previous years and steady acquisition of new vocabulary and structures. Comprehension skills are developed very well in both languages. Pupils understand much of what they hear and read in increasingly lengthy extracts in the foreign language. There are far more opportunities for individual oral work, especially in German, so that pupils become more confident. They move on from closely structured pair-work to much freer conversational exchanges, often with good pronunciation. Higher attainers become quite articulate in talking about past holidays and conveying opinions. All pupils enrich their oral work by including well-learned phrases and structures. The biggest improvement from Year 9 is in writing. All pupils benefit from more regular opportunities for creative writing. Higher attainers reach very high standards, writing at considerable length and with impressive accuracy on topics such as accounts of past holidays and work experience, letters to hotels to book accommodation or complain, and descriptions of their local area. Their writing is often imaginative and humorous. Many other pupils achieve good standards in writing, producing briefer and less accurate work, but nonetheless conveying information successfully.

112. By Year 9, standards are average in French and German. Teachers' assessments for 2001 show attainment to be well above average. There is a declining trend at the highest levels, explained by the fact that schemes of work do not target higher National Curriculum levels until after the Year 9 assessments. As a result, while progress by Year 9 is satisfactory overall, it is often unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8. There is strong focus on learning language rules and a steady accumulation of the vocabulary for prescribed topics. This improves pupils' reading and listening-comprehension skills. However, opportunities for speaking the foreign language are not regular enough; pupils' progress in speaking is slow, and many lack the confidence to make individual contributions in class. They cope adequately in structured situations, such as role-plays or surveys. In written work, although Year 7 pupils show good ability in constructing descriptive paragraphs on familiar topics, such as themselves and their family, they are still doing similar work in Year 9. There is no systematic extension, which would enable pupils to experiment with language and produce original writing to match their capabilities. This applies to pupils of all abilities, but affects higher attainers in particular. In German, Year 9 pupils are beginning to learn the past tense

and moving on to more demanding work. Overall, all pupils, including those with special needs, make similar progress when the majority should be making more rapid progress earlier in the course. Achievement is satisfactory in both languages.

113. In 2001, GCSE results at the higher grades were significantly above average in French, and well above average in German. Very high results have been maintained in French for several years. Results in German show a decline in 2001, attributable to results in one examination component. This weakness has been tackled in the current Year 11. The proportion of the highest grades is above average but not as high as in other subjects. Pupils' achievement overall is good in both languages.

114. Attitudes to learning are good in both French and German. Pupils in Year 7 like this new subject and bring a lot of enthusiasm to lessons. Some pupils express reservations about learning two languages in Years 7 to 9; they tend to prefer German, because lessons are more lively. Take-up for the study of two languages in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is also good support for the out-of-hours Japanese and Italian classes. Behaviour is very good, sometimes excellent. Pupils are polite to adults, collaborate well in pair-work and surveys, and take pride in the presentation of their written work. Their positive attitude enables them to make progress, even where lessons are uninspiring.

115. Teaching and learning are good overall in both French and German, satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There is some very good teaching in German. One unsatisfactory French lesson was seen, the main weakness being lack of pace and challenge. Teachers have good command of the language they teach, using it well to conduct lessons and provide a model. Pupils' own spontaneous use of the language is not well-established, despite efforts to encourage this. Attention to basic skills, especially in literacy through the focus on language rules, is satisfactory. Pupils use bar charts to record the results of surveys, use computers fairly regularly, but numeracy and ICT skills are practised rather than taught. Lesson planning is satisfactory overall, with activities covering different skills, while good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, expectations are too low; the pace of lessons is too slow, especially in French, and pupils spend too much time at one level. Expectations are much higher in Years 10 and 11, and promote good progress. In the best lessons, pace and variety of task stimulate pupils' willingness to participate. In a Year 11 German lesson, pupils rehearsed complex grammatical rules through imaginative oral activities, followed by listening and writing tasks to test their knowledge. They made good progress in all three skills.

116. Teaching methods are interestingly varied. In French, there is good use of song and games, overhead projectors, role-play and surveys, video and computers. At best, as in a Year 7 survey on hobbies in German, all pupils are engaged and make good progress because they are using the language for themselves. However, there is too much drawing and labelling. Teachers' effective colour-coding helps pupils' understanding, for example of gender, and this supports their oral and written work well in Years 10 and 11. The practice of the teacher asking a question and the whole class answering chorally often slows work down and is not effective. Relationships in class are very good, and teachers manage pupils with easy and friendly authority, creating a good learning atmosphere. Questions are well-targeted so that individual needs are met well. However, there are few opportunities for independent use of the language, for example in personal reading. Marking is up-to-date, but the addition of helpful comments is not achieved equally well across the department, especially in Years 7 to 9. Homework usually consolidates work done in class. In Years 7 to 9, too many tasks are of a routine nature, but there is much more challenge in Years 10 and 11, for example, through pupils' personal research.

117. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but not as effective as they might be in significant areas. There is insufficient sharing of good practice because the two subjects are managed separately. The department does what is asked of it, but is not proactive in bringing about planned improvement. Staff work very hard, but do not evaluate what is achieved sufficiently to identify strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the monitoring of work through observing lessons and sampling pupils' work does not have a significant effect on learning; assessments provide information which is not used to improve learning. Stability in staffing provides continuity in learning. Each pupil has a textbook to take home, extending the possibilities for homework. There are no computers in classrooms, but other ICT facilities are used. Library resources include a range of easy readers, but these are not used regularly. Satisfactory accommodation is enhanced by very good display, which teachers use in lessons to support learning. A homestay arrangement in France boosts the oral confidence and competence of those who participate.

118. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards are much the same, although there is less achievement of the highest levels. There was no unsatisfactory teaching at the previous inspection. Weaknesses identified in the previous report, notably lack of pace and low expectations, have not been successfully tackled. Schemes of work neither reflect everything that happens in lessons, nor do they promote progress at the pace of which pupils are capable.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- High standards
- Very good teaching and learning
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour
- Good leadership and management
- Very high standards in extra-curricular work.

Areas for improvement

- Music room too small for pupils and large equipment
- Not enough use of assessment data to guide planning
- Low numbers taking GCSE music.

119. Standards of work are well above average by Year 11. These standards are maintained because the teaching is very good. Pupils produce well-structured compositions, with good harmonic progressions underpinning extended melodies that have a good line. They make imaginative use of tone colour and effective use of their own instruments to create interesting textures. Performance standards are very high, with many examples of sensitive playing and singing. Most of the pupils in the GCSE groups take instrumental lessons and many have already achieved high grades in instrumental examinations. When listening to music, the pupils respond well and can appraise features of structure and instrumentation as well as mood. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory; they maintain the standards they bring with them to the examination course, supported by the quality of teaching they receive.

120. By Year 9 standards are well above average. This represents good achievement from pupils' standards when they join Year 7. In Years 7 to 9, pupils read music notation well. They read from the stave and are familiar with simple and compound time. Their performances are fluent. Instrumental pupils achieve high standards and use their instruments well in class-work. Pupils' performances in lessons are very musical, giving

them a real sense of achievement. The quality of singing is good, both in lessons and in the extra-curricular activities. Pupils can listen to and analyse music effectively, showing sensitivity to features of form and instrumentation. When composing, they demonstrate a good feeling for tone colour and produce structured pieces showing imagination. For example, Year 9 pupils are creating exciting music to accompany a cartoon film, and demonstrating good use of music ICT. The pupils make good use of musical vocabulary which reflects the subject's sound attention to their literacy development. However the subject makes little contribution to their numeracy development.

121. Pupils' very good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour in lessons contribute to their very good learning. The number of pupils taking music at GCSE in recent years is too small for valid statistical comparisons. The results indicate standards ranging from very good to excellent. The majority of pupils gain the highest grades.

122. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well, with a good balance and variety of activities. The management of pupils is very good, as are relationships, and these contribute well to a good ethos for learning. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this makes for productive working in lessons. Their positive attitudes are demonstrated by their very good support for the wide range of extra-curricular activities. For example, 160 pupils take instrumental lessons and over 100 pupils took part in a recent musical production. A strength of the teaching is the way in which the work is matched to the pupils' needs. For example in a performance lesson, instrumental parts of varying difficulty were provided so that pupils could work at an appropriate level within the ensemble. Lessons are based on music-making. There is a good emphasis on musicality which results in some very good performances. Resources are used well to make the work interesting; instrumental teachers support both the work in class and the extra-curricular activities very effectively. Homework is set regularly and supports the pupils' musical projects well, for example Year 9 pupils researched the music of the 1950s using the Internet and interviewing people who lived through the period. The pupils work productively, collaborating well in paired and group work; they concentrate well and can work independently. They are kept well-informed of their progress by consistent marking and a high level of individual attention. Gifted and talented pupils have many opportunities for extra work in class and in extra-curricular activities, as well as through instrumental lessons, and their progress is very good. No pupils with special needs were present in the lessons observed during the inspection.

123. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are detailed and thought out well. The priorities for development are appropriate to the needs of the department. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but data from assessments could be used more effectively for planning purposes. Although the department makes a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, there is a need for a departmental policy to co-ordinate and strengthen this further. The department is very well-resourced, both in terms of books and materials in the classroom and the library and in instruments, equipment and ICT. The much-improved provision in the latter enables the department to make very effective use of new technology. This improvement however has further exacerbated the accommodation problems of the department, resulting in a loss of space in the main teaching room. Time is lost when the classroom has to be reorganised between activities and this has a negative effect on pupils' learning. The department is unable to make use of the good provision of large tuned percussion instruments for music-making activities because of insufficient space.

124. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department has improved on the high standards of attainment reported then. This is particularly commendable in view of the staffing problems experienced before the appointment of the present head of department. Very high standards of teaching have been maintained, as has the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Very good provision for pupils with special physical needs
- Pupils' enjoyment of their work and good collaboration with others
- Very good standards of the most able pupils shown in the successes of individuals and teams at local, county and national levels.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' achievement restricted by the low allocation of time in Years 8 and 9
- The deteriorating surface of the tennis/netball courts.

125. By Year 11, standards are above average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils benefit from the time allocated to the subject and, with very few exceptions, are motivated to improve their skills. Pupils have good understanding of the personal and social benefits for their future lives of continuing exercise and a healthy life style. They work hard and with enjoyment and achieve good skills in performance. Pupils taking the GCSE course work purposefully to develop good understanding of the theoretical aspects. Year 11 pupils show very mature levels of interest and thoughtful contributions when discussing the effects of politics on sport. Pupils speak clearly, confidently and fluently. Written work is well-organised and clearly expressed. However, its effectiveness is too often reduced by errors such as misspelling of words in common use and the omission of full-stops.

126. GCSE results in 2001 were above average for the higher grades gained, showing a decline since 2000. Pupils did less well in physical education than in their other subjects. The 2001 results were adversely affected by staff changes, changes in the style of assessment and the effects upon learning of the reduced time allocated to the subject in Years 8 and 9.

127. Standards by Year 9 are above average. Pupils develop above average levels of skill in a good range of games and in activities such as athletics. They have good skills of passing and catching and make effective use of space, for example in netball. Higher attainers in particular are able to make appropriate decisions when competing. In athletics, average performance skills of sprinting are improved because of pupils' above average understanding of starting techniques as well as by the presence in most groups of girls with high potential. Very good attainment in dance was observed in Year 8. Pupils show very good skills in planning and performing complex sequences of movement, whether in response to the teachers' direction or created by themselves. Because pupils have a good understanding of techniques, they use the studio's excellent mirror provision to evaluate and improve their presentations. Pupils' good technical awareness is evident in their positive evaluations of each other's performances.

128. Pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress in lessons and their achievement is good. This results from their high levels of interest and motivation. Because they understand that their work is pitched according to their personal potential, they are

encouraged to sustain their efforts. They take pride in their own work and praise the work of others, so that levels of confidence rise. Pupils with physical impairment are helped to make good progress by the provision of adapted equipment or modified tasks. Those with particular talents are appropriately challenged in lessons and are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities, both at the school and provided elsewhere in the community.

129. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and good understanding of how to assess pupils' skills against national standards. They explain tasks very clearly, linking their lessons to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. Teachers explain techniques clearly and demonstrate them effectively so that pupils learn quickly. They have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and achievement, and are quick to give praise and encouragement. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and comprise a series of linked activities, with sufficient variety to help pupils sustain concentration. Teachers encourage pupils to use appropriate technical terms from the time they join the school. Pupils' learning is helped by the confidence they have in their teachers and in each other. However, the effectiveness of teaching and learning is restricted in Years 8 and 9 by the reduction of lesson time to an allocation which is well below average. The marking and assessment of pupils' written work are not based on a clear policy and common procedures. Although teachers usually indicate their general approval or concerns, they rarely indicate how pupils might further improve their written work.

130. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers in the department form a strong team. Standards are rising because teachers are effective in helping pupils of all levels of attainment to fulfil their potential. The unsatisfactory allocation of curriculum time, with its adverse effect on pupils' learning, is a matter for the school.

131. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Strengths noted in the previous report have been maintained. The increased length of lessons means that time can be used more efficiently, but the overall reduction in time over Years 7 to 9 restricts pupils' progress.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils' very good achievement and very high standards in Years 10 and 11
- Very good teaching and learning
- Very good leadership and management
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and very good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory marking and assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.

132. Standards of work by Year 11 are very high. Pupils know the difference between relative and absolute morality. They understand the standpoints of the major religions on various aspects of relationships, such as marriage and abortion. They reach their own decisions on these matters and others by arguing their case logically and from an ethical stance. They apply what they learn to their own lives. Year 11 pupils say that the course helps them to think more about religion. In 2001, the proportion of pupils on the short GCSE course achieving higher grades was well above average. The results of the 13 pupils who followed the full GCSE course were very high: 10 achieved grade A* and three achieved grade A. On both courses, results in the previous two years were equally high. These results, together with the work seen, show that pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.

They respond to the very high expectations of their teachers by working very hard. They produce a large quantity of work, much of it done at home; this is especially true of pupils on the short course who have only one lesson a week.

133. In Years 7 to 9, standards are well above those expected. This represents good achievement, even taking into account the selective nature of the school, as pupils arrive in Year 7 with very different levels of attainment in religious education. Pupils have very good knowledge of Christianity and the other major faiths of the world. These are taught through a thematic approach which helps understanding. Pupils learn about the lives of the most important religious figures such as Jesus and Muhammad, and about common themes such as initiation ceremonies and festivals. They understand that all faiths are answers to people's quest for a supreme being. They thoughtfully develop their own opinions about faiths and their responses in class show that they respect beliefs other than their own.

134. Pupils with special needs make the same rate of progress as other pupils. Teachers know the pupils well and know the targets in their individual education plans. Although lesson plans do not make specific allowance for pupils of different abilities within each class, no particular groups of pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, do less well than others.

135. Teaching and learning are very good overall, good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. All the teaching seen was at least good and there was one excellent lesson. Teachers are specialists and have excellent knowledge of their subject. Consequently they are able to draw on a depth of understanding to answer pupils' questions confidently and accurately. The planning of lessons follows a departmental pattern and is excellent. The learning targets are shared with the pupils at the beginning of each lesson so that they know what they are expected to learn. During lessons, pupils maintain their high level of interest, helped by having a range of different tasks and by the good use that teachers make of the department's resources. For example, a Year 11 lesson began with the showing of a video about the Jewish marriage ceremony which was followed by a discussion. The teacher showed the pupils various artefacts such as a prayer shawl and wine goblet as used in the ceremony, as well as postcards of traditional Jewish rings. The pupils then worked in pairs on a good worksheet. Finally the teacher set homework that challenged pupils to think more deeply about the symbolism of the service. Most lessons end with a useful review by the pupils about whether they have achieved the targets set out at the beginning.

136. Teachers' expectations of pupils are never less than good, but higher for Years 10 and 11 than for Years 7 to 9. Consequently pupils in Year 7 to 9 make very good efforts to produce their best work, while those in Years 10 and 11 make excellent efforts. This can be seen in their exercise books and files which contain carefully considered and very well-presented work. It is also seen in pupils' keenness to volunteer answers in class and take part in discussions. They produce high quantities of written work, particularly those pupils in examination classes. Teachers have very good class management skills based on good relationships with pupils and mutual respect. Above all, the love that teachers have for their subject shines through in their lessons. Pupils respond with excellent behaviour and very good attitudes to religious education. Classrooms are happy and very busy places.

137. Marking is the weakest aspect of the teaching. In Years 7 to 9, comments do not show pupils what they have to do to improve. Because of this and because there is no system of subject levels as exists in the National Curriculum, pupils have only a vague knowledge of how well they are doing. Comments in the marking are more helpful in Years 10 and 11, often because the teacher is showing pupils how to obtain better examination grades. The department is just beginning to introduce a system of levels. When

this is fully operational there will be a benchmark to which teachers can refer when writing their comments as well as when tracking pupils' progress.

138. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy. There is plenty of opportunity for pupils to speak and listen to one another. They practise their writing skills in a variety of ways: short answers, extended essays, diary entries and poetry. The department contributes to the development of pupils' ICT skills, both in word-processing and research on the Internet. Literacy and ICT skills were combined in pupils' production of a very good book of their poems on 'Loneliness'. Some of the library stock is out-dated.

139. The leadership and management of the department are very good and the head of department has a very clear vision for the department's future. The curriculum has been extended, particularly for Years 7 to 9, to include art and design and drama and it is planned to include music. The department contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a good range of visits to improve pupils' learning. Resources are good, particularly videos and artefacts for all major faiths. Teaching is thoroughly monitored. The development plan identifies appropriate ways to improve.

140. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Very high standards have been maintained and teaching has improved. More attention is now paid to linking religious knowledge to pupils' own lives. The development plan has been improved. Statutory requirements are now met.

INSPECTION REPORT

SECTION 2

JOINT SIXTH FORM

CARRE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mr Peter Wheeldon

Unique reference number: 120699

KESTEVEN AND SLEAFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Ross

Unique reference number: 120633

ST GEORGE'S COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Headteacher: Mr Paul Watson

Unique reference number: 120700

Sleaford

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Reporting inspector: Ms Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 4th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 189789/243230

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

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The full inspection of the joint sixth form was carried out at the same time as full inspections of two of the schools, Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School. A full inspection of St George's College of Technology was carried out in March 2001. Because of the joint arrangements for the sixth form, this report is published as Section 2 of the reports for Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School, and as a separate report for St George's College of Technology. The 16 subjects were inspected in each of the schools where they are taught.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE THREE SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

Carre's Grammar School

Type of school:	Selective
School category:	Community
Gender of students:	Male
Number of sixth-form students	142
Address:	Northgate Street Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7DD
Telephone number:	01529 302181
Fax number:	01529 413488
Name of chair of governors:	Mr JP Duckett

Kesteven and Sleaford High School

Type of school:	Selective
School category:	Community
Gender of students:	Female
Number of sixth-form students	178
Address:	Jermyn Street Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7RS
Telephone number:	01529 414044
Fax number:	01529 414928
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Flett

St George's College of Technology

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Foundation
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number of sixth-form students	207
Address:	Westholme Sleaford
Postcode:	NG34 7PS
Telephone number:	01529 302487
Name of chair of governors:	Mr GL Arnold

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2918	ML Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the joint sixth form Results in the joint sixth form and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the joint sixth form led and managed? What should the joint sixth form do to improve further?
9188	J McHugh	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the joint sixth form care for its students?
20192	T McDermott	Sixth form co-ordinator		
22695	R Cardinal	Team inspector	History	
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
11838	D Cronin	Team inspector	French	
21971	J Glennon	Team inspector	Religious education	
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education	
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology Food studies	
17269	J Johnson	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music	
8620	B Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18453	C Lower	Team inspector	Psychology	
20709	D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography Government and politics Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10941	R Robinson	Team inspector	Business education Health and social care	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

SECTION 2

PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

With 527 students on roll, the sixth form is much larger than in most schools. An above average proportion of Year 11 pupils from the three schools continues in full-time education at age 16, the large majority in the joint sixth form. There are slightly more female students than male students. Numbers have increased steadily over the past 10 years, and projections indicate continuing growth. Students are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, which overall are neither particularly advantaged or disadvantaged. They enter Year 12 with, overall, above average standards. An extensive range of advanced courses, both academic and vocational, is offered, with some intermediate courses and general studies. The majority of students work towards key skills certification. About four-fifths of the students go on to courses in higher education after completing their sixth-form courses.

The leadership and management of the joint sixth form rest with the three headteachers, although there is a jointly funded, largely administrative post of director of studies.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Good teaching and students' mature attitudes to their work enable them to sustain standards over Years 12 and 13 which overall are above average. Their achievement overall is satisfactory. The student body is a responsible group of young people who have integrated successfully into joint working in three distinct school communities. They are aware of the challenge of forging a group identity. These strong features are balanced by weaknesses resulting from the lack of strategic management of the joint provision by the three schools, the lack of vision for its future and inadequate procedures for oversight by the three governing bodies. No funding received for younger pupils is used for the sixth form, but to a small extent, the reverse is true. Overall, provision is satisfactory, but not cost-effective.

Strengths

- Very good range of sixth-form courses
- Good teaching
- Good feedback on their work giving students a clear picture of their progress
- Students' very good attitudes and personal development
- Students are served well by the commitment and subject expertise of their teachers.

What could be improved

- Lack of joint arrangements for the three governing bodies to carry out their responsibilities for the quality of education in the sixth form
- Inadequate arrangements for the leadership and management of the joint sixth form
- Poor procedures for monitoring students' attendance
- The satisfactory overall achievement
- Information about students' assessments and results not used effectively in planning for the sixth form as a whole
- Statutory requirements not met for religious education.

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

HOW THE JOINT SIXTH FORM HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Previous inspections of the three schools did not report on the joint sixth form.

STANDARDS

- Results for the sixth form as a whole are not available.
- Students' achievement across the joint sixth form is satisfactory overall.
- Strengths in the standards of work seen are in French, geography, government and politics and product design.
- Students' achievement is very good in product design and good in business education, food studies, geography, French, health and social care, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, psychology and sports studies.
- The above average standards seen in English are better than the A-level results in 2001 which showed some under-achievement.

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: students show a mature, hardworking attitude towards their studies; most are highly motivated to succeed.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: students get on well with each other, and generally, with the staff in all three schools. Many develop into effective independent learners.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 12 – 13 - Joint sixth form
Quality of teaching	Good

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

- Teaching and learning are almost always good, while satisfactory in chemistry, and with strengths in food studies, product design and psychology.
- Students' learning needs are nearly always met well, and soundly met in biology and chemistry; there are strengths in French, food studies and psychology, and excellence in product design.
- Key skills are taught well.
- A strength in learning is the mature and independent approach students take toward their studies.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards, broadly reflecting prior attainment. • Good achievement. • Teachers' good knowledge.
Chemistry	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement overall, very good for higher attainers. • Teachers' good professional knowledge. • Satisfactory planning of lessons, but tied too rigidly to syllabuses. • No joint planning of work across the three schools.
Biology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Insufficient co-ordination between the three schools.
Food Studies	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Very good use of students' assessments to guide curriculum development. • Very good subject knowledge.
Product Design	Provision is very good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Very good achievement. • Very good teaching and learning, with some excellent teaching. • Students' excellent attitudes.
Business Studies	Provision is very good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Consistently good teaching and learning. • Not enough liaison across the joint sixth form.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching and learning, with some very good elements. • Clear checks to ensure that courses match students' needs.
Sports Studies	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Insufficient co-ordination of courses across the sixth form.
Health and Social Care	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching, with a wide range of strategies to engage students.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and Design	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Good teaching and learning. • Poor liaison across the sixth form.
Geography	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement. • Consistently good teaching and learning. • Good co-operation between staff but no joint arrangements for management.
History	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average standards. • Satisfactory achievement. • Teachers' secure professional knowledge. • Little evidence of inter-departmental liaison.
Government and politics	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement. • Good teaching. • Teaching not co-ordinated to ensure consistent quality of provision.
Psychology	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Good achievement. • Very good teaching and learning.
English	Provision is satisfactory across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above average standards. • Unsatisfactory achievement given students' results at GCSE. • Good teaching and learning.
French	Provision is good across the joint sixth form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well above average standards. • Good achievement measured against prior attainment. • Good teaching and learning. • No cohesion in the management of learning across the sixth form.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory overall; communication between the three schools does not ensure that all students receive the support they sometimes require. Students feel that they usually receive good, but sometimes conflicting, advice when deciding upon options to take in the sixth form, although information about courses is helpful. Sixth-form induction is unsatisfactory. There is no system in use to provide a check on students' whereabouts or their safe travel between schools. Good advice and guidance is available for students planning their next step after the sixth form.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Unsatisfactory. Arrangements for running the sixth form are no longer fit for purpose given the considerable increase in student numbers, the wide range of courses provided and the new national arrangements for examinations post-16. There is no management structure for the sixth form as a whole and no procedures for the three governing bodies to carry out their responsibility jointly for the quality of education it provides. A vision for the development of the sixth form is lacking and there is no plan for improvement. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the provision to ensure that all students receive equally good opportunities on all courses are not in place. The sixth form is not cost-effective although it covers its own costs and has a current underspend.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Questionnaires were completed by students from Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School.

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extensive choice of subjects and courses. • The good quality teaching. • Teachers provide individual help and support with work when needed. • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would recommend it to others. • They know how well they are doing. • The advice and guidance they receive about post-18 options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unsatisfactory management of the sixth form at all levels in the three schools so that students' needs are not considered well enough. • The inadequacy of the induction programme in providing essential information and building a sixth-form ethos. • The poor communication systems between the schools especially for students being taught away from their 11-16 school. • The lack of common procedures for matters such as registration, regulations, timetables, and use of the library for the joint sixth form.

The inspectors agree with students' views, which are confirmed by the evidence from the inspection.

Students are very supportive of the opportunities the joint sixth form gives them. They enjoy being members of the group of schools. However, they are almost all highly critical of the way the joint sixth form is managed. Students feel that all three schools are keen to talk of a joint sixth form but are reluctant to relinquish any control; they think that the best interests of the students are not put first.

Groups of students spoken to from all three schools were critical of the lack of induction available at the different sites; of communications, for example about the extra-curricular opportunities available to them at all three schools; of guidance about how to manage their time and the expectations of free periods; and of differing break times and expectations of behaviour, work and dress. For example protective laboratory coats are required to be worn at two sites but not the third; uniform must be worn on one site but not the other two. Students feel there are insufficient opportunities to socialise as a sixth-form group; and that, as they are always moving between sites, this leaves little time for groups wishing to continue with private study or social activities – because of restrictions on space and differing rules on the use of sixth-form common rooms. The inspection team finds these comments perceptive and justified.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

SECTION 2

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. In the work seen standards are, overall, above average in the 16 subjects inspected. Where standards are well above average in product design, geography, French and government and politics, the style of teaching is well-matched to the individual needs of the students. In these subjects, with the exception of French, information from assessments is used to guide planning. Where standards are the highest, many students show a high level of skill in the analysis of key concepts, and a sophisticated understanding of the application of these concepts to their courses. In history and sports studies where standards are average, there is often little liaison and sharing of good practice between staff from the different schools, the students do not have sufficient opportunities to manage their own learning, and the value of ICT as a tool to improve learning is not recognised.

2. In 2001, the results in all the A-level and advanced vocational courses were above average. Results for the joint sixth form as a whole have not previously been calculated; this was done for the 2001 results during the inspection, with the director of studies and the heads of sixth form from each of the three schools. Across the three schools and in each of them, the gain from Year 11 to Year 13 was as expected. Students' achievement overall is satisfactory over Years 12 and 13, with two notable exceptions. Students with lower results at GCSE make better gains when taking AVCE courses than when taking A-level courses. The exceptionally high attaining male students do even better at A-level than at GCSE. There are no other significant variations in the quality of achievement of male and female students or between students from the three schools.

3. Overall, the work seen in the 16 subjects inspected shows good achievement; this reflects the good achievement in the majority of subjects, and very good achievement in product design. In biology, chemistry, art and design, history and sports studies achievement is satisfactory; in English achievement is unsatisfactory. Balancing the satisfactory gain from Year 11 examinations and assessments to those in Year 13 with the achievement in the work seen leads to an overall judgement that students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. With few exceptions, students come into the sixth form with above average standards, and leave with above average standards. There are limited arrangements to track their progress on courses. Students' success is often evaluated solely by their examination results. Insufficient attention is paid to measuring progress against prior attainment, both for individual students and course groups as well as sixth-form wide.

4. Students' very positive attitudes to their studies are reflected in the generally good completion rate on courses and the high proportion going on to further study when they leave school, 80 per cent. The retention rate within subjects is more than 90 per cent over an academic year. Key skills are taught both as separate lessons and through the general studies course. In all lessons, and in a key skills session, students show above average skills, with strength in communication.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Students display a mature, hardworking attitude towards their studies. Their behaviour in and around school is good and they are helpful and courteous. Most are highly motivated to succeed and have very strong views of the benefits the joint sixth-form arrangements bring to them. They do not feel inhibited in expressing their views, which they

do in a responsible, courteous and mature manner. They listen carefully and respectfully to their teachers, and their response in lessons is good. They are very well-prepared for the responsibilities of adult life, whether continuing as students or becoming employees.

6. Students get on well with each other, and generally, with the staff in all three schools. They are a friendly, outgoing group of people. There is a very good working atmosphere, which while having a different feel in each of the three schools, is clearly founded on a desire to improve on previous best. A developing sense of team-working is evident, through which many students support each other's learning. Many students develop into effective independent learners. There is a high level of social interaction, with good mixing across age, gender and race. Several sixth-form students help in classes in their 11-16 schools. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development.

7. Attendance in Years 12 and 13, where recorded, is satisfactory. Movement between the three schools is, for the majority, achieved well although there is some incidence of lateness. However, examination of registers recording sixth-form attendance shows that their completion is sporadic. Though attendance is not seen to be having a limiting effect on students' achievement, it is nonetheless an issue which should be addressed as a matter of personal discipline for the students, and as a duty of care issue for the management of the joint sixth form.

8. The students are an astute group of people, well aware of the political issues facing the three very different schools in developing the joint sixth form. In interviews, they are unanimous in desiring its fuller integration. Students are very loyal to the sixth form and appreciative of the efforts of their teachers and the good quality of teaching they receive. They think that, when given the opportunity, students from all three schools mix well together.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

9. Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality is at least satisfactory on 99 per cent of lessons, good or better in 87 per cent, and in 33 per cent, very good or better. In five lessons, teaching was excellent in food studies, history and product design. Across the three schools, students are served well by the commitment and subject expertise of their teachers. There is some very good teaching in the subjects referred to above and in art and design, chemistry, English, French, government and politics, mathematics, physical education and psychology. In teaching of this quality, teachers bring life to the most demanding concepts, with the result that students readily grasp challenging ideas. The students value the high expectations they feel are set for them and respond willingly. They make good use of the time allocated for independent study.

10. In almost all subjects the overall standard of teaching is at least good; in product design, food studies and psychology it is very good. Chemistry teaching is satisfactory. In those lessons where teaching did not reach a good standard, students were not given clear evaluative comments about their work and where improvements were needed. Consequently, they did not have an accurate understanding of how well they were doing and what to tackle next in order to raise their standard. On occasion, students settle for their predicted grade as their individual target because they do not know how to do better. In most subjects, key skills are taught well and teaching is always at least satisfactory. A satisfactory key skills lesson was observed during the inspection.

11. Excellence in teaching shows in product design, where teachers' high expectations and highly effective methods and handling of student groups result in excellent effort by the students who set a demanding pace for their own work. There is excellent handling of

student groups in French which stimulates concentrated effort from the students. These qualities in teaching were evident in electronics, where very challenging tasks engaged students fully throughout the session and stimulated rigorous intellectual effort. Teachers' subject expertise is strong in English, mathematics, art and design, product design, food studies, geography, history, ICT and psychology. Students generally have a good idea of how well they are doing, although in biology, chemistry and psychology this is only satisfactory because the feedback they receive from their teachers is satisfactory.

12. The good teaching and learning are generally not leading to good achievement. The good quality is ensuring that students sustain their standards on entry to the sixth form. The evidence from the inspection and from the 2001 results confirms this. However, the lack of arrangements across the sixth form as a whole for tracking individual progress to check that all students are being equally well challenged to raise their game is the significant factor. A threshold of very good teaching with excellent challenge needs to be established.

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

13. The range of learning opportunities provided is very good and builds appropriately on the courses provided in students' 11 to 16 schools. The offer matches the students' ambitions and aspirations and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. It includes a very wide range of 32 advanced academic and four advanced vocational courses, with intermediate courses and two GCSE re-sit courses. There is a well-structured programme for those students needing to improve their key skills.

14. A good range of enrichment activities is provided in each of the three schools, with strengths in sports and adventure activities, in business development programmes such as Young Enterprise, in charity and fundraising activities and in supporting the personal development of younger school members. The personal, social and health education programme includes a range of activities including preparation for examinations. The statutory requirements for the study of religious education are not met because students taking four A-level subjects are not required to follow the general studies course which contains the religious education element.

HOW WELL DOES THE SIXTH FORM CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

15. Agreed procedures for monitoring students' attainment, for supporting their academic progress and for meeting individual needs are not established for the joint sixth form. While teachers know students from their own school very well, they are not always confident when dealing with students from other schools. There is some evidence of preconceptions about 'new' students being allowed to interfere with a professional approach. There is little evidence that information gained from students' assessments, both at GCSE and during Years 12 and 13, is used to ensure that curriculum planning and development are targeted appropriately to achieve the highest standards. In many subject areas, there has been no review of assessment and monitoring arrangements because this has not been a joint sixth-form requirement. The effect is to limit students' achievement. The use of the data and information gathered from students' assessments as a tool for planning is unsatisfactory.

16. Procedures for carrying out assessments are however, good, and good in the majority of courses. Students receive good progress reports. In addition to showing their predicted examination grades, the reports give clear targets showing how students can achieve the required standard.

Advice, support and guidance

17. Students in the sixth form remain on the roll of their 11 to 16 school and continue to receive the good levels of support they did in Years 7 to 11. However, lack of agreed procedures and effective communication between the three schools result in the level of care being fragmented when students attend different school sites for different subjects. When those students who are confident seek out help from teachers from any of the three schools, this help is willingly given. But, when students lack the confidence to do this, there are no systems to ensure that appropriate, well-informed support is offered when needed. Responses to the questionnaire completed by students from Carre's School and the High School show that students do not always find that there is satisfactory support when they experience personal difficulties. The overall quality of guidance is satisfactory.

18. Little information about the sixth form is given in the prospectuses of the three schools. There is no joint prospectus for the sixth form; a short sixth form booklet gives the briefest of information. The information available is insufficient for students and their parents to feel confident that their choice of courses is the most suitable. When deciding on the subjects they will take in the sixth form, students receive good advice about courses run at their 11 to 16 school, but often insufficient, and sometimes conflicting advice about the full joint sixth-form offer; for example, about differing requirements and approaches in different courses in the same subject. Students from each of the three schools found that speaking to other students was more helpful than speaking to staff when it came to making decisions about where to study a particular subject. Lack of awareness of the demands of subjects and of new ways of learning have resulted in some students feeling unprepared. They are unsure of the rules, regulations and expectations operating in the three schools, as hardly any are jointly agreed for the sixth form. The brief induction programme offered is inadequate. The students themselves feel that there should be team-building exercise when they start in Year 12, to 'sweep away' misconceptions and apprehensions and clarify minor procedural issues. For example, some students in Year 12 were still, at the time of the inspection in March, unclear about how to access the extensive library facilities in each school.

19. More than half the questionnaires returned by students were critical of aspects of sixth-form life relating to communication of information, care and support. They also think that the lack of space and unwelcoming common rooms limit their opportunities for mixing except in lessons. They are critical of the lack of toilet facilities for female students in the boys' school. In discussion, groups of students from all three schools were critical of the lack of induction at the different schools; of communications, for example about the extra-curricular opportunities available to them at each school; of the lack of guidance about how to manage their time and expectations for free periods; of differing break times; and of differing expectations of behaviour, work and dress. For example protective laboratory coats are required to be worn at two schools, but not the third; uniform must be worn at one site but not at the other two. Students feel there are insufficient opportunities to socialise as a sixth-form group. They find that moving between schools leaves little time for groups wishing to continue with private study or social activities, due to restrictions on space and differing rules on the use of sixth-form common rooms. The inspection team finds these comments perceptive and justified.

20. Good advice and guidance is available for students planning their next step after the sixth form. Two of the schools regularly join together for presentations, for example on university entrance or gap years, but these opportunities are not extended to the third school. Advice and support for those students applying to enter higher education or employment are good and a significant proportion achieves university places.

21. Each of the three schools records sixth-form attendance in different ways using different systems. Each requires students to register in person at their 11-16 school prior to attending lessons. Given the distance between sites and the time allowed for travel in the timetable, students frequently fail to comply with this procedure and go straight to the site where their first lesson will take place. Students' explanations of their friends' possible location are accepted by staff in order that the absent student gets an attendance mark. Form tutors may not see some of their students for a number of days, depending on the timetable. Signing in and out procedures for students vary between the three schools. They are not rigorously applied or effectively monitored by staff; nor consistently adhered to by students. As a consequence, the attendance data available is inaccurate. The three schools cannot be certain that the whereabouts of each student are known throughout the school day. This has major implications for the health and safety of students and is a breach of each school's duty of care towards its students.

HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

22. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. A vision for the development of the sixth form and a strategic view about how this will be achieved are lacking. There are no joint procedures for the three governing bodies to exercise their responsibilities for the sixth form. There is no management structure and no post for overall responsibility for what is now a large and rapidly growing organisation, the size of a small school, with over 500 students and a joint income approaching £2 million. Best value principles are not applied to decision-making for the joint sixth form. The sixth form is not cost-effective. Above average levels of funding generate a surplus of £86,000, which is not used within the sixth form to raise achievement or support other educational priorities. Staffing, resources and accommodation are good for the 16 subjects inspected. Overall, students enter the sixth form with above average attainment and leave with above average attainment. This represents only satisfactory achievement.

23. The three headteachers work together within a joint administrative group (JAG). The role of this group is not clearly defined. While holding full authority, it exercises little apparent responsibility for all decisions regarding the sixth form. This arrangement fails to achieve managed provision and does not have the capacity to do so. There are no agreed systems for managing, monitoring, evaluating and developing the work of the sixth form. The three schools do not have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision because the lack of systems disallows this. Each governing body receives a termly report for discussion at governing body meetings. However, no arrangements are in place (such as a joint sixth-form strategy committee of governors from each school) whereby the three governing bodies can exercise oversight of sixth-form provision and development.

24. As currently defined, the job description of the post of director of studies is not a leadership and management post. It is impossible to fulfil, consisting of an extensive list of tasks focused on administrative detail as opposed to strategic co-ordination. The post holds responsibility for collecting examination fees, but has little influence over budget planning. It holds responsibility for examination entries but has no influence over course provision. There are separate and largely dissimilar job descriptions for the heads of sixth form in each

school. As a consequence, the influence of these senior staff in moving the sixth form forward is constrained.

25. Students are very supportive of the opportunities the joint sixth form gives them. They enjoy being members of the group of schools. However, they are highly critical of the way the joint sixth form is managed and speak of a lack of communication between the three schools. Students feel all three schools are keen to talk of a joint sixth form but reluctant to relinquish any control. They feel that the best interests of the students are not put first.

Resources

26. In all aspects of sixth-form resourcing, the quality is good overall. Staff are well-qualified and their expertise never less than good. The level and quality of resources are mostly good, while satisfactory in biology, chemistry and history. The accommodation is good, except for English, biology, chemistry and history where it is satisfactory. In one of the three schools, library provision is inadequate, and in general, the provision for common room and study facilities is unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE THREE SCHOOLS DO TO IMPROVE THE SIXTH FORM FURTHER?

- (1) Implement joint arrangements for the three governing bodies to exercise their responsibility for sixth-form provision through, for example, determining the remit and membership of a joint group or committee.
(Paragraphs: 21-24)
- (2) Implement systematic procedures for the leadership and management of the joint sixth form through:
 - Implementing an appropriate staffing structure, including administrative support for the joint sixth form
 - Determining the responsibilities of all staff working for the joint sixth form
 - Establishing procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality and cost-effectiveness of provision.(Paragraphs: 21, 22, 24, 31, 39, 57, 61, 66, 74, 79, 88, 103)
- (3) Implement procedures for monitoring students' attendance.
(Paragraphs: 8, 21)
- (4) Use information from assessments and results to identify strengths and rectify weaknesses in provision, through:
 - Analysing students' results in a range of ways: by subject, by course, by staff, by site, by gender, and by individuals' prior attainment at GCSE.
 - Using the analysis as a factor in monitoring teaching and learning.(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 10, 12, 15)
- (5) Implement arrangements to meet the statutory requirements for religious education.
(Paragraph: 14)

SECTION 2

PART C: JOINT SIXTH FORM DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	89
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Sixth form							
Number	5	24	48	11	0	1	0
Percentage	6	27	54	12	0	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

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

These figures are not available for the sixth form as a whole.

SECTION 2

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

In the inspection, 16 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	49	94	87	51	43	6.4	5.8
Further mathematics	2	100	N/A	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Biology	46	96	88	41	34	6.0	5.2
Chemistry	26	96	85	50	43	6.7	5.9
Physics	25	88	88	40	40	5.7	5.7
Food studies	6	100	N/A	0	N/A	4.3	N/A
Graphic products	11	100	N/A	27	N/A	6.2	N/A
Product design	7	100	N/A	86	N/A	8.7	N/A
Business	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.0	N/A
Business studies	24	100	92	50	25	7.2	5.5
Economics and business	18	100	89	50	36	7.2	5.5
Information technology	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.6	N/A
Information and communication technology	6	100	N/A	17	N/A	5.0	N/A
Leisure and tourism	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.4	10.1
Sports studies	36	100	93	25	25	5.4	5.1
Health and social care	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	8.2	10.8
Art	8	100	N/A	0	N/A	3.2	N/A
Art and design	12	100	96	33	46	6.5	6.6
Music	1	100	93	100	35	8.0	5.7
Theatre studies	9	56	N/A	11	N/A	2.7	N/A
Geography	35	100	92	51	38	7.0	5.7
History	36	89	89	56	37	6.6	5.5
Law	8	100	N/A	38	N/A	6.0	N/A
Psychology	13	100	87	15	34	4.8	5.3
Sociology	8	75	88	38	35	4.8	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good achievement
- Good teaching and effective learning
- Students work diligently and are keen to do well.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' planning not always effective for the wide range of ability in some classes
- Lack of subject co-ordination between the three schools.

27. The inspection covered mathematics and further mathematics at AS- and A-level. These courses are divided into four areas: pure, mechanics, statistics and decision mathematics. Each area is divided into modules, some of which are compulsory and others optional. Overall, the curriculum is wide and varied and gives most students the opportunity to follow the courses of their choice.

28. Standards in the work seen are average and reflect the 2001 examinations results. Students are working at a variety of levels. This variation is largely the result of the differences in prior attainment of students when they started the course, some of whom had not taken the higher level GCSE course. These students find that they are handicapped by their lack of algebraic skills when learning new work. For example, in a large Year 12 class, students were asked to solve quadratic inequalities; this proved difficult for a small number of students who were still unable to solve quadratic equations. In the further mathematics group, standards are high. Students solve second order differential equations and use hyperbolic substitutions to evaluate integrals. At all levels, students develop their knowledge and understanding well and evidence from earlier work indicates that achievement is good. Overall A-level results in 2001 are average and have remained fairly consistent over the past few years. This represents good achievement for the majority of students. However there is a wide variation in the results attained by individual students.

29. Students' attitudes and response are good in all groups. They have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. They answer questions and engage fully in discussion. This helps them to clarify their ideas and make good progress. Higher attainers persevere well with difficult problems. This helps to develop their understanding and insight. A particular strength is the logical way in which students organise and present their work. This helps them with revision in preparation for examinations. Students are pleased with the way in which the joint sixth form works and the additional choices it gives them when selecting their courses. Mathematics is a popular subject; almost all students complete their course and sit the examination.

30. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned at an appropriate level. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject and how to teach it effectively. This helps them to motivate students who are determined to understand what they are doing. In some large classes, however, teachers have difficulty in ensuring that lower attainers

understand the work. This results in some students wasting time until help is available. By discussing appropriate examples, teachers help students to understand the principles and methods used to solve problems. For example in a Year 12 mechanics lesson on moments, students were encouraged to consider the turning effect of forces in a variety of situations. By discussing these situations, they learnt to calculate these effects and use them to solve similar problems. Good regular assessment helps students to remedy errors and tackle new work with confidence.

31. The subject is managed well in each school. Teachers work well together and there is a positive ethos for learning. However, overall management systems for the subject within the joint sixth form are not in place, with no regular arrangements and procedures for example, for meetings and the sharing of information.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Above average results at AS- and A-level
- Good integration of a range of practical work into biology teaching
- Well-equipped laboratories.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient account taken in planning of the range of students' abilities
- Insufficient co-ordination between the partner schools.

32. Standards of work are above average. By Year 12 students can plan an investigation of the effect of ethanol on the cell permeability of beetroots. They can explain confidently the extent of solvent coloration under different conditions and justify their choice of filter for the colorimeter. These standards reflect the 2001 AS-level results, which were above average both for passes and at the highest grades. The staying-on rate is high, with over eighty per cent of students continuing their study of biology to A-level. By Year 13, students show confidence in the use of aseptic techniques. They use statistical techniques to interpret their work, for example, the density variations of several 'mock' blood samples. These standards reflect the 2001 A-level results which were above average both at pass grades and at the highest grades. While results have maintained similar standards over three years, the average points scored improved in 2001. In relation to their GCSE results, students' achievement is satisfactory. Almost all completed the course. Achievement in relation to students' qualifications on entry is satisfactory. Both in Years 12 and 13, the overall standard achieved at GCSE is maintained. Classes do not include different groups of students, for example from ethnic minority backgrounds, and gifted and talented students have not been identified by the schools. Male and female students do equally well. The joint sixth form has not analysed results according to gender.

33. Attitudes and response are good. Students' attitudes to biology are very positive. They evidently enjoy the subject and value the opportunity to work with students from other schools. Even when lessons merely require students to listen or answer written questions, behaviour is excellent. Students co-operate very well in pair-work, which in some classes includes mixed gender groups. However, there are limited opportunities for students to show initiative. Attendance levels are good.

34. Teaching and learning are good. Staff know their subjects well and expectations are generally high. Teaching of key skills is satisfactory. Planning has weaknesses which limit some students' learning. Although subject content is covered, the schemes of work are

either little more than a summary of the examination specification or else are incomplete. There are no planned strategies to cater for the range of students' learning needs. By contrast, good integration of practical work strengthens learning and resources are used well. In the less successful lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for students' participation. Students do not always receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. The strengths in teaching and learning ensure that standards are maintained well. The strengths do not raise students' achievement because of the areas needing attention.

35. Leadership and management of the joint sixth-form provision are unsatisfactory. Teachers from the three schools do not meet regularly to discuss methods of teaching the subject. There are no opportunities to share and so learn from good practice. Where teaching is shared between two schools, the biology co-ordinator does not have sufficient access to data from lesson observations of all the teachers involved. All laboratories are well-equipped. Libraries have numerous textbooks but there is inadequate provision of books to inform on recent subject developments, to challenge higher attainers and promote interest in biology.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Above average results at AS- and A-level
- Well above average higher grade passes at A-level
- Some good practical teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory long-term planning for teaching the curriculum
- Insufficient attention to the range of students' abilities in planning and in some teaching
- Insufficient contact and co-operation between teachers in the three schools.

36. Standards of work are above average. By Year 12 most students understand simple organic formulae. They can distinguish between free radical and electrophilic reactions. The ablest students can suggest why hydration of some alkenes forms more than one alcohol. These standards reflect the 2001 AS-level results which were above average both at pass grades and at the highest grades. Only about two-thirds of the students who started AS-level chemistry in Year 12 have continued to A-level. Over half of the students in one group discontinued their study of chemistry. By Year 13, students can tackle quantitative questions on equilibria. They apply their knowledge of intermolecular forces to interpret solubilities. Overall, these standards reflect the 2001 A-level results which were above average at pass grades and well above average at the highest grades. These results reflected the make-up of the group which included many students whose standards were well above average and others who were of lower attainment. Results have maintained similar standards over three years. In relation to their GCSE results, students' achievement was generally satisfactory. Almost all students completed the course. Students' achievement in the work seen in relation to their qualifications on entry is satisfactory overall. Both in Years 12 and 13, the overall standard achieved at GCSE is maintained. However, students in one very small group did not benefit from the challenge of working alongside other students. Most Year 12 students are being challenged and enthused by their teachers, but in one group, students were confused about redox behaviour of halogens. A wider sample of the work of this group was not made available. No gifted and talented students had been identified by the schools and classes did not include different groups of students, for example from ethnic minorities. Male and female students do equally well. No analysis of results according to gender was available.

37. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Students display very positive attitudes in lessons and co-operate well in practical work. In all three schools, students show high interest in chemistry. Attendance levels are good.

38. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Year 13, teaching was either satisfactory or good, whereas in Year 12 it was mainly very good, but there was some poor teaching. Staff know their subjects well. Teaching of key skills is satisfactory. Course planning is unsatisfactory. Some schemes of work are little more than lists of content; there is insufficient reference to the range of resources to be used, including ICT, and to strategies to cater for students' varying abilities. Where teaching is very good, students carry out practical work with care and due attention to safety, and can set up and use complex apparatus. The learning of weaker students is enhanced by teachers' careful explanations which make good use of molecular models. A very good lesson on thermochemistry supported students who found the calculation difficult, while including discussion of a challenging optional extension exercise. Although one group carried out a practical assessment carefully, they wore no protective clothing; students who did not observe the rule of silence disturbed others. Learning of one Year 12 group was taken forward well by very good, supportive comments on homework. In Year 13, marking was less detailed and students were given limited guidance on how to improve. As in biology, the strengths in teaching and learning ensure that high standards are maintained. The strengths do not raise students' achievement because of the areas needing attention.

39. Leadership and management of the joint sixth-form provision are unsatisfactory. Teachers from the three schools do not meet regularly to discuss teaching methods. There are no opportunities to share good practice and benefit from it. Three examination specifications are taught in Year 12 and two in Year 13. This has prevented the amalgamation of one uneconomically small Year 13 group with another. All laboratories are well-equipped. Libraries have numerous textbooks but few books on famous chemists, either male and female, or of general interest; for example on environmental chemistry or the impact of recent discoveries such as in polymer chemistry or pharmaceuticals and molecular modelling.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on food studies and product design within the subject area of design and technology. No lessons in other subjects were observed.

Design and technology

Food studies

Overall, the quality of provision in food studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Rising standards of attainment which mostly exceed the targets students are expected to achieve
- Very good relationships and mature attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students' lack of knowledge of food science
- Teaching of food science not integrated effectively into practical work to support learning.

40. Food studies are taught to two groups on two sites. The course was introduced as a pilot in 1999. It is currently studied by female students only, although it is open to male students. The schools have responded to the different needs of students by offering two courses, the decision based on the monitoring of students' progress and results and knowledge of the way different students learn most effectively. The courses are generally similar but with some differences of syllabus and slightly different emphases in teaching and learning styles. In consequence, and because of very good teaching, standards have risen over the three years and numbers choosing to take the subject are rising.

41. Standards of work are above average. Although small numbers are involved, most students gain higher grades in their A-level work. They research and plan their coursework thoroughly and record the development of their projects in well-presented and logically sequenced order. Students achieve higher standards of presentation when they make effective use of computers to desktop publish their coursework. Students have a good knowledge of nutrition which they use to plan food for different groups, such as children and those who need to follow a gluten-free diet, applying quality control criteria resembling those used in industry. Students evaluate their work realistically and modify their products to improve taste, texture and appearance. They present practical work attractively to appeal to consumers and keep good photographic evidence of this. Students show very high regard for health and safety and very good knowledge of these in different settings. However, they have insufficient understanding of the underlying scientific concepts relating to food preparation to utilise this in sufficient depth when developing food products.

42. Achievement is good. Most students enter the sixth form with good GCSE grades, although some have limited experience of the subject. They adapt well to the higher demands of A-level work, except in food science which they find difficult. They make good progress in project management and independent research skills and in developing food products for particular niche markets. They learn to extract relevant information from published texts without resorting to plagiarism. Students write at length and accurately, communicating information efficiently through good use of technical terms. Most use computers to present the results of their research as bar charts. They have sufficient mathematical skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of the course.

43. Results at A-level in 2001 were above the national average, reflecting the rising trend in standards in the work seen. Results at AS-level were average and matched or exceeded students' expected standards.

44. Students' attitudes are very good, often excellent. Students are interested, enthusiastic and determined to achieve their best. Their very good relationships with each other and with teachers encourage high quality discussion and respect for others' views.

45. Teaching and learning are very good, and on occasion, excellent. Teachers have high expectations. They have persevered with developing new courses and modifying provision to match students' learning needs. They have very good subject knowledge which they communicate effectively and with enthusiasm. They keep very good records of students' attainment which are used very effectively to monitor progress and set targets for improvement. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with time targets to develop students' ability to work to deadlines. Students learn to manage their projects well because they are given high quality guidance which encourages them to work independently. In the best lessons, targets for each student are set at the start so that students know exactly what they are aiming for and take responsibility for achieving it.

46. Although leadership and management are separate for the two groups, both benefit from good direction for the teaching of the subject and effective monitoring of performance which has led to successful modification of provision.

Product design

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

Strengths

- Very high standards
- Very good teaching and learning
- Very good relationships and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough emphasis on knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials
- Development plan not updated.

47. Product design was introduced in one of the schools three years ago.

48. Standards are well above average by Year 13. Students have very good design skills and a mature approach to evaluating their work. They develop ambitious ideas and make excellent progress in learning the new and specific skills needed to complete projects. The products they design are imaginative and functional. Development of designs is documented well in logically organised folders. These show depth of research and understanding of the design process of a very high order. Sketches and formal drawings very clearly communicate ideas and chart the progress of projects, including how ideas change or are modified as a result of realistic evaluation of work in progress. Students work independently and consider their designs very carefully, discussing them with peers and the teacher. All expect to justify each design feature. Standards are above average in Year 12. Students adapt well to the additional demands of study at this level. Their work is highly original and shows a very good standard of craft skills when they make products such as a wine rack or items of furniture. Students use a range of hand and machine tools confidently and skilfully and know which to select for different tasks, paying very good attention to detail when they cut and join materials. They use computers as appropriate to present work and to achieve high standards in designing and drawing. However, their knowledge of the properties of the different materials they work with is not sufficiently developed.

49. Results in examinations reflect the work seen in lessons. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at A-level in 2001 was well above average and has been consistently so in recent years. In AS-level examinations, the proportion of Year 12 students gaining the highest grades was high. All students exceeded their target grades.

50. Achievement is very good. Most students enter the sixth form with high grades at GCSE. They respond very well to the additional demands of advanced level work and make very good progress. All current students exceeded their targets grades in examination coursework in March 2002. Some did so significantly, for example improving from grade E to grade C. The staying-on rate to Year 13 is good. Those who discontinue the course in Year 13 have considered reasons for doing so.

51. Students show excellent attitudes and response. Their approach to learning is mature. Their relationships with each other and their teachers are excellent. When evaluating each other's work, they listen to advice from their peers as well as from teachers. They take responsibility for their work and develop in confidence.

52. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use teaching methods which inspire and challenge students. They encourage independent learning strongly. Students take their work very seriously because teachers have very high expectations of them. Teachers plan lessons very well and provide excellent individual guidance to ensure that all students achieve their best. They encourage students to be ambitious in their plans and to develop high quality designs. The level of discussion develops confidence and maturity in students and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The teaching of key skills of literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are successful in guiding students to produce accurate, well-written and well-presented assignments.

53. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is very clear direction for the work of the subject. Teachers work as a team and share good practice, sometimes by combining lessons to provide additional support and to communicate their enthusiasm for the subject to students. The head of department sets a good example in this respect and uses such occasions as a contribution to staff development in which technicians, trainee teachers and learning support assistants are included. All work together for the benefit of students and because they gain clear enjoyment from being involved.

BUSINESS

The focus was on A-level business studies. The Advanced Vocational course in business and the A-level economics and business course were also sampled. The work in the AVCE course shows average standards and good teaching and learning. In the economics and business course, the work shows above average standards; satisfactory teaching and learning were observed.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and very good planning
- Good use of assessments to monitor students' progress
- Good planning across the three schools for the introduction of new courses
- Wide range of courses catering for all students' needs across the three schools.

Areas for improvement

- Marking not clear enough about how standards can be improved
- The three business departments not meeting regularly enough to explore good practice.

54. Standards at both AS- and A-level are above average. Both male and female students develop a good understanding of key business concepts and apply this knowledge effectively to case studies. Most take pride in their work, with well-organised notes and very well presented coursework assignments showing good ICT skills. A significant number however, have weak skills in file management, presenting work without dates or headings and without identifying homework and class work. In lessons, Year 13 students confidently answer questions on business strategy and show that they appreciate the factors affecting growth and recession. These standards are reflected in the 2001 A-level results. All students gained grades A to D, with half gaining the highest grades. This has been a continuing trend over the past three years. When account is taken of the students' prior attainment at GCSE, this represents good achievement. Value-added data suggests that a significant number attains better grades than predicted. The course is popular and most students continue into Year 13.

55. Students are usually well-motivated, many choosing to continue with business studies at degree level. Relationships are very good. Students enjoy business studies, listen attentively, collaborate well and are keen to do well. All show a willingness to engage in independent study.

56. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers' very good up-to-date subject knowledge provides a solid basis for students to develop their understanding. This was notable in Year 13 when students looked at factors leading to global prosperity and stability. Lessons are planned well; most have shared learning targets and a wide range of timed activities; the increasing level of challenge in successive activities generates good pace in the work. A case study on well-known national companies, investigating corporate responsibility, ensured that Year 13 students were well-engaged throughout the long session. A mix of brainstorming techniques, group work and individual reflection were all supported well by the teacher's interventions; there was constant review of the targets and questions to prompt students' understanding. These methods strengthened the learning. Lessons offer good opportunities for students to develop key skills. For example, students communicate their findings orally and use computers to enhance written presentation, although sometimes their oral contributions are limited and insufficient use is made of ICT. Tracking of progress is good and takes account of prior attainment, class work, homework and examinations. Work is assessed conscientiously and positively, although students do not always receive enough guidance as to how it can be improved.

57. The joint sixth form works very well in terms of the wide range of courses provided to meet students' needs. However, opportunities are lacking for the three departments to meet more regularly to explore and develop good practice. While the individual departments are well-managed, the leadership and management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on A-level ICT. The joint sixth form provides a very good choice of ICT courses for students. Results in the Advanced Vocational course in Year 13 were above average in 2001. All students achieved well, gaining at least a merit, with over half securing a distinction. Overall standards in the Year 12 Intermediate GNVQ course are average. However, there is some variation within the two teaching groups, with about a third of students working at an above average standard, and a third at a standard a little below average. This variation reflects the attainment on entry of different students. In all teaching groups the general level of achievement is good. No students studied for the Intermediate GNVQ in 2001.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Very good range of courses to meet the differing needs of students
- Good achievement by most students
- Effective teaching of a wide range of courses because of teachers' very good subject knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Students not benefiting fully from the various courses on offer because of the lack of subject liaison between the three schools.

58. Standards by Year 13 are above average. Most students can write an effective specification for a database. They confidently explain how they arrived at this in order to meet the requirements of their task and how they used the technical facilities available to produce a user-friendly system. Most can produce a system to meet requirements such as providing a booking system for a concert series. Most show good methodology in testing different proposals before selecting one. Achievement is good. In 2001, results at A-level were average. Although a below average proportion of students gained the highest grades, all passed by securing at least Grade E. The 2001 results were less good than those gained in recent years, although achievement was generally satisfactory. There have been improvements aimed at securing a return to normal levels in 2002. Most Year 12 students who took the AS-level examination passed.

59. Students show good attitudes and a high level of commitment to their individual projects. In discussions, they are very positive about the courses on which they are enrolled and the teaching that they receive. A significant proportion identified ICT as their favourite course. The course is popular and numbers increasing. Students intending to continue their studies into Year 13 usually do so.

60. Teaching and learning are consistently good. A very high level of subject expertise enables teachers to adapt their approach successfully for different course requirements and the specific needs of students on each. For example, difficult concepts and techniques, such as database construction, are explained with clarity and sensitivity so that students are well-supported in 'conquering' these. However, in one Year 12 lesson, a small number of students of lower prior attainment encountered difficulty in handling some difficult concepts. This was not helped by the fact that the teaching group was large and there was considerable variation in students' attainment. When students work on individual projects, teachers monitor their work closely and guide well. They do this by pointing students in the right direction but leaving overall responsibility for the work with the students themselves. Teachers have very good rapport with their students.

61. The leadership and management of the subject are good within the school that provides the courses. Students' needs have been effectively audited and courses provided to match the range. There is however, scope for better liaison between the three schools to ensure that all students are able to benefit fully from the courses and that their progress is monitored closely, whether or not they are following a course in their 11-16 school. Comments from students indicate that timetabling considerations often influence the allocation of a place in a vocational or A-level group, rather than the suitability of the course for individual needs. This is rightly recognised as an issue by the three schools.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on A-level sports studies within the subject area of physical education. Lessons were also sampled in the Advanced Vocational course in leisure and tourism. The standards seen are average and achievement is good. Most students complete the course and results in 2001 were above average. Staff have very good subject knowledge. Detailed assessments and the use of ICT as a support for learning are features of this successful subject.

Physical education

Sports studies

Overall, the quality of provision in sports studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The availability of the course at each school
- Good teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistent encouragement of students' independent learning
- Means of improvement not always indicated in assessments of students' written work.

62. All the lessons observed were on the theoretical elements of the course.

63. Standards of work are average. Students in Year 13 have sound and sometimes very detailed knowledge of the required elements of anatomy and physiology. They have a good understanding of characteristics of excellence in performance and can speak and write intelligently about sociological and psychological issues associated with sport and healthy life styles. They are on course to achieve results consistent with their prior attainment in examinations. Written work is usually relevant, clearly communicated and with appropriate detail and illustration. Most students make appropriate use of ICT, including imported graphics, and use both electronic and printed text for research. The effectiveness of the work of a small but significant number in each group, including that of some otherwise able writers, is reduced by errors of elementary spelling and faults of grammar and punctuation. There are no clearly identifiable differences in the attainment of female and male students.

64. The majority of students who begin the AS-level course in Year 12 complete it and continue to A-level. Those who cannot meet the demands of the course, despite additional help and support, are advised at an early stage not to continue. At AS-level in 2001, the majority gained a pass grade, with more than a quarter gaining the highest grades. Since this examination was introduced only recently, comparisons cannot be made with national figures. Most of the students who were unsuccessful in the examination have subsequently re-taken it successfully. In recent years, results at A-level have been close to national averages. In 2001, all students gained at least a pass grade. The proportion gaining the highest grades was average. There were significant differences in the average point scores of the three groups but their combined average was just above the national figure. Almost all students gained the grades expected on the basis of previous attainment. Achievement is satisfactory.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and occasionally, very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of how students' attainment is assessed externally. They explain their aims for each lesson and link the work to earlier and future learning so that students understand the relevance and coherence of what they are doing. They have high expectations of students' effort and achievement and insist that work should be completed by agreed times. They value the contributions that students make to lessons and express their approval, although sufficient opportunities for students to work independently are not always provided. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and support good attitudes to learning. There is variation in the quality of assessment of students' written work both within and between the groups. The best practice identifies the strengths of the work, makes a judgement and offers guidance to students on the means of improvement, such as the need to provide more detail or illustrative examples.

66. The management of the course in each school is based upon a common concern for the success of each student and a determination to raise standards further. There is no formal sharing of experience or practice between the schools and no joint management structure. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus in the inspection was on the Advanced Vocational course in health and social care. No other subject was sampled.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good teaching encouraging good learning
- Work matched to students' needs through individual support
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers
- Students' good attitudes and response
- Good co-operative planning of the new Advanced Vocational course.

Areas for improvement

- Too many students not completing the course
- Unsatisfactory attendance
- Middle ability students' weak skills of critical analysis and evaluation.
- Students' lack of confidence in tackling the highest level of work.

67. Standards are average. Students' coursework is generally thoughtful and well-presented, with effective use of ICT. Higher attaining students in Year 13 show critical ability when considering how communication methods can affect a health campaign. Teachers' records indicate a rate of absenteeism that has a negative effect on learning. Students' assignments in Year 13 reveal that they are not challenging themselves sufficiently to meet the criteria for higher grades. Discussions with Year 12 and 13 students indicate that they are making good progress in developing independent study skills and in understanding the assessment criteria for their assignments. However, the skills of analysis and critical evaluation of middle ability students are insufficiently developed. Of the eight students entered for health and social care (advanced) in 2001, three gained distinctions and one a merit. No course completion results for AVCE are available. The current Year 13 students have achieved pass grades in the unit tests. Of the 14 students who started in September 2001, nine remain committed to the course. Students generally enter the course with lower average GCSE scores than those of students entering other courses. A comparison of Year 12 students' coursework with their GCSE grades shows good achievement. Students are well-informed about the subject in advance, have good attitudes to their work and teachers stress good standards. In 2000, in the health and social care NVQ course, three students gained a pass result.

68. All students are well-motivated. They show maturity in discussion. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and application to work and students respond well to these expectations. Students see the value of the course to their future career plans.

69. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have strong knowledge of their subject and use a range of teaching approaches that facilitates effective learning. There is good planning for lessons and good long-term planning of the course. Students are given good guidance, so that they are very clear about what needs to be covered in the lesson. There is

a high level of individual support for students and this means that all are fully included in lesson activities and make progress. By good interaction with students, teachers' provide reinforcement of the language and care values of the subject. Homework and class-work are integrated well.

70. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. All teachers of health and social care are well-qualified and well-informed about developments within the subject. Their good co-operation in planning the new course is now benefiting students' progress. Assessment procedures are good. There is a commitment to improving standards. Joint sixth-form arrangements are working satisfactorily.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on A-level art and design. The A-level music course was also sampled. Very few students have studied music in recent years. Recent appointments have reinvigorated the subject. Teaching is lively and students' attitudes are positive. Small numbers make national comparisons at AS-level impossible. Students take advantage of every opportunity out of hours to practice their skills.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good knowledge of the subject
- Very well targeted advice and guidance for students
- Students' use of their research into the works of artists to enhance the development of their own work.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient communication and sharing of skills between the three schools.

71. Standards by Year 13 are above average. A broad range of media and approaches are pursued to a high and often very high standard. Standards of drawing and painting skills are generally very high, whether vigorous and expressive or very skilfully controlled. For example, in a photography project, a 'blue-flash' technique, often used as a lucky chance shot, was effectively refined and controlled. Students' research into the work of artists and their subsequent use of the findings to enhance their own work is a strength in all three schools. For example, a study of the painter Ben Nicholson led to the absorption of elements of his style in students' work. In 2001, the results at A-level were broadly average. Within these results, there was some under-achievement among students taking A-level art but overall, achievement is broadly satisfactory. About half the students choose to continue the subject to A-level.

72. Teaching and learning are good. A key strength across the schools is the teachers' very good knowledge of students as individuals that enables them to give students very well-targeted advice and guidance. In a very good lesson, the teacher prepared individual lesson plans for each student, outlining their main targets for the lesson and the materials and resources required. Individually and collectively, the teachers show a breadth and depth of subject knowledge that instils confidence in the students to follow their own interests and ideas. A variety of teaching styles is used, reflecting the differing characteristics of each department, but all create a good working atmosphere and mutual trust and respect between teachers and students. All students receive good guidance on examination requirements. Key skills are taught well. Literacy skills are extended by the good quality of

the discussions between staff and students that enhance the use of both expressive and technical vocabulary. This is reflected in students' logbooks and research essays and in the confident way in which they speak about their own work. The teaching of ICT is good. There are many very good examples of word-processing in the form of well-produced and illustrated essays. Explorations into digital imagery are evaluated, refined and used creatively. Teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. It is unevenly represented across the departments, although skills are well-taught where appropriate as, for example, in the photography course.

73. Students' attitudes and response are very good across all the schools. Very good levels of effort and concentration are common features, along with a strong emphasis on careful presentation and pride in the work.

74. Within the individual departments, priorities and educational direction are very clear. Each is committed to improvement and has the potential to build on its present levels of success. There is a special character to each of the departments, each with strengths in particular media. The range of expertise contained collectively in the departments is extensive: staff are practising artists and skilful teachers. However, the limited communication between the three departments results in a loss of potential development. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on A-level geography, history, government and politics and psychology. The A-level courses in electronics and religious studies were also sampled. Students make good progress in religious education lessons and teaching and learning are good. Excellent teaching and learning were seen in electronics so that the standard of work was well above average.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Above average A-level results in 2001, well above for male students
- Students' good attitudes
- Good teaching well-matched to the needs of students.

Areas for improvement

- Highest attainers, particularly female students, not gaining as high grades as they should in 2001
- Lack of systematic liaison between the three departments adversely affects students.

75. Standards by Year 13 are well above average. Generally, students are achieving well. Those who reached high standards at GCSE generally maintain these and those with below average standards at GCSE improve on them. A Year 12 group for example, in which GCSE results were below average, is moving well towards average standards, although many students are not yet fully secure in these. There is no significant variation in the work of male and female students. The evidence from recent A-level examinations however, is that the highest attainers, particularly female students, are not translating the standards shown in lessons into the highest grades to the extent that might be expected.

76. A-level results were above average in 2001. The results of male students were well above average, for both pass rates and the highest grades. Those of female students were above average for pass rates, but only average for the highest grades. All students gained a pass grade. In 2000, both the proportion passing and the proportion gaining the highest grades were lower than in previous years. In 2001, while the pass rate recovered, the proportion gaining the highest grades did not. The overall results were slightly lower than the grades predicted on the basis of prior attainment, although in one of the two groups they were slightly better. On the whole, the performance of male students was slightly better than expected, while that of female students was a little worse. All Year 12 students passed their AS-level examinations.

77. Students' attitudes are good. They listen carefully to teachers and other students and concentrate well on their work. When asked to undertake research, most do so diligently. Students are generally willing to volunteer answers, although a small number do not persevere with these as well as they could. There was little evidence of participation in discussions in lessons. In discussions with inspectors, students were overwhelmingly positive about their courses and teachers. However, one group feels that they could have received better guidance when choosing their courses as they were not fully aware of all the options available within the joint sixth form. Generally they believed that timetabling considerations were a more powerful influence when choosing which course to take up than the respective qualities of the various geography courses on offer. The findings of the inspection about the unsatisfactory induction for students support these views. Geography recruits well; students complete their course. About 80 per cent continue into Year 13.

78. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is well-pitched to the needs of students. For example, a Year 12 group in which prior attainment was predominantly below average, was given strong support in grasping complicated statistical calculations; the homework provided a good opportunity to practise and consolidate the skill. Learning is often improved by the good balance between strong guidance from teachers and opportunities for students' independent work. In most lessons, teachers give good guidance on examination techniques. Good opportunities are provided to analyse numerical data. For example, Year 13 students examined burglary statistics to assist their learning about urban hazards. Occasionally, teachers take answers from volunteers, but do not sufficiently challenge those choosing to stay silent. There is often an overestimation of what can be achieved in the lesson time available. Generally, teachers take steps to ensure that students not following the course in their 11-16 school are included well in activities.

79. Teachers in the three schools co-operate well with each other. However, this depends upon the efforts of individuals and is not organised systematically by the three schools together. Consequently, the benefits to students of having a good choice of courses with for example, different emphases on the contribution of coursework to the final examination, are not fully realised. The management of the subject across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Government and politics

Overall, the quality of provision in government and politics is **good**.

Strengths

- Good results at AS-level and good achievement
- Students' very good attitudes and full use of the learning opportunities offered to them
- Good, knowledgeable teaching, often providing depth and challenge to students.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of collaborative working between teachers
- Lack of opportunities to visit political events and activities.

80. The course has recently been re-introduced; no students took the A-level in 2001. All Year 12 students who took the AS-level examination passed and achieved well. Now in Year 13, these students are continuing to achieve well, by maintaining well above average standards overall. In some parts of their work, for example when debating the effectiveness of pressure groups, the majority show very high standards. Many students embarking on the course in Year 12 show that they have yet to fully grasp the conventions of essay-writing and the need to write with full relevance to the questions asked. However, the work of current Year 13 students shows that they pay very good attention to advice given in marking and produce essays that are fluent, relevant and confident. This is shown for example, in work which analyses in detail the differences between the democrat and republican parties in America.

81. Students' attitudes are very good. They prepare thoroughly for presentations and debates. Because, during these, they listen so well and respond with commitment and relevance, they make full use of the opportunities they provide. In discussion with inspectors, students were highly appreciative of the course and the way in which the subject is taught. A view was stated however, that the two parts of the course, taught by different teachers, did not always fit together well. This comment reflects the inspection finding about the lack of collaborative working.

82. Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, knowledgeable teaching adds depth to learning, for example, by alerting students to the complexities of the relations between pressure groups and different governments. Opportunities are frequently provided to prepare for and take part in presentations and debates; these are a highly challenging and effective means of learning through active participation. They also strongly reinforce key speaking and listening skills. During debates, teachers facilitate with tact and restraint, but with assertiveness when appropriate. Teachers usually ensure that all students are involved in discussions. Occasionally however, contributions are taken predominantly from volunteers, with insufficient challenging of those choosing to remain silent. Diligent marking, with much helpful guidance, makes a considerable contribution to the good improvement that most students make in their essay-writing technique. While there is generally good focus on the learning and use of key vocabulary, this is less good on a few occasions when teachers fail to ensure that expressions are understood by all. A few lessons have the characteristics of a lecture, supported by teachers' questions. These lessons tend to be satisfactory, rather than good or better, because students' active participation is restricted.

83. Leadership and management are good. The newly re-established course is a significant improvement to the curriculum offered to sixth-form students. It is developing well, with twice as many students enrolled in its second year as in the first and attracting students from each of the three schools. Students benefit from visits to events such as sixth-form conferences and talks from visiting speakers, but this provision does not include

visits to political events such as local council meetings and sessions of parliament and this is a weakness.

History

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

Strengths

- Wide choice of courses
- Good teaching
- Students' very good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of resources sometimes limits students' learning
- Lack of procedures for liaison between the departments
- No joint sharing of good practice.

84. Standards of work are average and achievement is satisfactory. A-level examination results in 1999 and 2001 were average, while those in 2000 were below average. Over the same period, the proportion of the highest grades has been above average, with the proportion in 2001 being well above average. Overall in 2001, students underachieved in relation to their GCSE scores on entry to their courses. The pass rate in the new AS-level examination was high in 2001 with over one third of students entered achieving the highest grades.

85. In the work seen, higher attainers in Year 13 use sources very well to compare and contrast attitudes to reform in the Habsburg Monarchy and display very good skills in analysis and argument when assessing the significance of Henry VIII's wish for divorce. Average and lower attainers show varying weaknesses in technique, for example in failing to fully explain key terms. For example, Marxist theory and Lenin's methods were assessed as contributions towards Stalin's dictatorship without first being fully defined. In Year 12, higher attainers can give a clear analysis and evaluation of the significance of rival alliances as causes of World War One and the effectiveness of propaganda and terror as means of control in Nazi Germany. Average and lower attainers show weaknesses in essay technique, including too narrative a style and lack of definition of key terms. For example, an assessment of a past government's effectiveness in dealing with the problems of Ireland was not prefaced by an adequate definition of the problems themselves.

86. Students' attitudes are very good and the great majority complete their courses of study.

87. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a secure knowledge and lessons are well-planned to give students a clear structure for their learning. In Year 13, students discussed and defined the concepts of liberalism, nationalism and conservatism and then used these concepts to analyse the German government of 1871. In some lessons, there are good opportunities to develop study skills and then share research in class discussion. This approach works well in larger groups where, for example, sub-division into smaller groups is possible. In one Year 13 lesson, groups examined religious differences at the time of Elizabeth I from a variety of perspectives and then presented their findings. In another, students used their own research in a wide-ranging discussion on the inability of French monarchs and their ministers to achieve financial stability. The sharing of ideas is limited in smaller groups and teaching is less able to build on students' responses. In another Year 13 lesson a discussion on essay-planning was limited significantly by the very small teaching group. Lack of resources sometimes restricts learning; in a Year 12 lesson, a narrow range

of resources limited the work of higher attainers during group activities. These are features which have a limiting effect on students' achievement. They are not picked up as significant because of the lack of joint planning for the sixth form.

88. Courses are generally planned well; the range of three courses is good. Good use is made of monitoring procedures to check progress. However, there are insufficient structures to facilitate effective departmental liaison. Good practice is not routinely shared. Leadership and management across the joint sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning
- Good relationships and care for students' welfare
- Students taking responsibility for their own learning in a mature way.

Areas for improvement

- Students' lack of individual learning targets and awareness of the grade levels at which they are working
- ICT not used for storing and collating students' assessment data.

89. Standards by Year 13 are above average. Year 13 students make good progress with assignment work and can put forward well-reasoned arguments. They have a clear understanding of the investigative process and can criticise methodology well. For example in health psychology, students readily identify the subjective measurement of pain as a weakness in studies. The work seen indicates an improvement in standards. A-level results for 2001 were average for a pass grade but below average for the highest grades. The results were similar for the year 2000. The 2001 AS-level results were average and similar to those in 2000. Students did better than their GCSE results predicted and this good level of achievement was reflected in the work seen both in lessons and in students' files. Year 12 students evaluate psychological studies effectively. For example in a study on bystander responsibility, students were able to identify strengths and weaknesses and explain with confidence the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' in relation to experimental design.

90. Relationships between staff and students are good. Mutual respect is a strong feature and this results in a safe and caring environment for the students. As a result they enjoy psychology and show a very positive attitude towards the subject. Recruitment is good and numbers are increasing. Those students intending to continue into Year 13 do so.

91. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The main features are very good subject knowledge, well-planned lessons, very good use of resources and good classroom management. For example, in a good Year 12 lesson on the human brain, students were provided with access to excellent resources that included information sheets, a computer programme and evaluation sheets. The stimulating material was incorporated into a range of well-managed activities; as a result students made good progress, gaining a clear understanding of how the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain differ. In a very good Year 12 lesson on correlation, students progressed from basic ideas to more complex applications of correlation through a well-structured sequence of activities in which they were all fully involved. Students are constantly encouraged to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. For example in a very good lesson on evaluating psychological studies, students were skilfully prompted by the teacher to relate crime reduction methods to psychological theories. The teacher made good use of prior learning in

using evaluation skills and students demonstrated confidence and independence in their responses. The work is challenging and any student who experiences difficulties is given individual support. Communication, numeracy and ICT skills are handled well and the teachers go out of their way to ensure that all students are included in all aspects of the lessons. Assessment is good. Marks for end of unit tests and essays are recorded in teachers' mark-books, although no centralised profile of students' progress is in place in the department. Technology is not used to aid the recording of assessment data. Although students obtain good written feedback about the value of their work in terms of general comments, grade levels are not given and students are not always clear about the level at which they are working. Consequently individual subject specific targets are not in effective use. These are features which limit students' achievement.

92. Leadership and management are good. An enthusiastic teacher who is concerned for students' welfare as well as their academic progress leads the department, showing commendable commitment to supporting both students and staff. The department is well-organised, well-resourced and well-managed. Schemes of work are in place together with an informative handbook. Although relatively new in post, the head of department has already had a positive effect on students' progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French A-level courses. A-level courses in German and Spanish were also sampled. Results in recent A-level and AS-level examinations in German show standards to be average for the small number of students entered. In the Year 13 lesson seen and in students' files, standards remain average. Teaching is good. A-level results in Spanish in 2001 were well below average. However AS-level results for students now in Year 13 show a sharp improvement. In the lesson seen, and in files of work, it is clear that these students are making good progress in response to good teaching.

English

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, sometimes very good
- Good range of five English or English-related courses
- Students' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Results overall not reflecting students' prior attainment
- Opportunities for students to develop their own ideas restricted in some lessons.

93. Standards by Year 13 are above average overall. Nevertheless, students are not working at a standard which reflects their GCSE results, so their achievement in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. In the language element, higher attainers show well above average confidence in their analysis of writing for different purposes and audiences, using linguistic vocabulary with accuracy and perception. They recognise and reproduce the style and register of authors from different periods, often with entertaining results, such as a commentary on a Grand Prix race by Samuel Johnson. Overall, however, students' ability to comment on the impact and development of their own writing is variable in its depth and analytical skill. In their study of literature, the majority of students write well-organised essays in which their arguments are clearly developed and supported well by close reference to the text. The students studying the World War One poet Wilfred Owen had each read at least one relevant novel as background, and most of them were able to relate

the attitudes in these books to the poetry. In Year 12, students are generally more confident when commenting on themes and meaning than on the effects of language and imagery. This is because these two aspects of the course are not given equally close attention. By Year 13, most have developed the skills of reading and analysing unfamiliar texts. One group, for example, was very capably researching ballad conventions to inform their reading of 'The Ancient Mariner'. When given the opportunity, students work together well in mixed groups, refining their ideas through discussion and deducing meanings from context. The key skills of oral and written communication are well-developed, and students use ICT effectively in presenting final versions of their work.

94. In 2001, A-level results were close to the average in the three English courses. Overall, the candidates across the joint sixth form under-achieved in relation to their previous attainment at GCSE, except for those who followed the language course. In 2000, results were above the average in language and close to it in language and literature combined; English literature results were below average. The proportion of students gaining the highest two grades has been variable in all three courses.

95. Almost all students choose to continue their English studies to A-level. Students usually respond well to their English teaching. They listen with respect to their teachers and to each other, and their level of concentration is good - except where there is an excess of teacher talk. When given a variety of learning situations, including group research and reporting back, they remain fully engaged throughout the lesson. When directed or encouraged to work in mixed gender groups they have lively discussions. The care that students take in organising and presenting their work is good.

96. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the best lessons, teachers plan a sequence of activities that enables the students to build on previous knowledge and to develop independent but well-justified insights and opinions. When group work is directed well, it allows students to learn from each other. The very good subject knowledge demonstrated by most teachers gives the students confidence in them. Relationships are generally good-humoured but purposeful. Marking is thorough and helpful, challenging students to extend their thinking and their linguistic or critical skills. Many students have improved their work significantly through re-drafting in response to teachers' written comments or one-to-one progress interviews. Individual progress is monitored carefully in most classes.

97. English is well-resourced and managed in each of the three schools. Students are provided with helpful information about course requirements. The teachers' good knowledge of individual progress enables them to intervene with appropriate guidance when it is needed.

French

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

Strengths

- Above average results at A-level in 2001
- Students' good progress
- Good teaching
- Students' excellent attitudes contributing to their progress.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of pace in a minority of lessons
- Lack of cohesiveness in the management of learning
- Lack of opportunities to spend time abroad.

98. By Year 13, standards are well above average, and improving. Most students begin with high GCSE grades and all achieve well. They speak fluently and with very good pronunciation. They are able to exchange and challenge views on topics such as the impact of the Euro or future applications of new technology. All students join in such discussions because they have good command of the language and the necessary factual information. They work independently of the teacher if required to, and have the confidence to use overhead projectors to deliver oral presentations. Their files show rapid improvement in learning and applying complex language structures, verb tenses and moods. As a result, they cope well with challenging extracts of written and spoken French, following the gist and identifying key details. There is more variation in written work, though much of this reflects the high standards reached in other skills. Higher attaining students write at length, building arguments on a range of social and moral issues such as traffic pollution and the situation of Jews in France during the Second World War. Some such writing emanates from literary study, which they enjoy. On occasion, students write less ambitiously. Although they apply newly learned structures well, they are prone to errors in basic language, such as gender and number. However, they convey a good deal of information successfully.

99. Although results have varied in recent years, they have been close to or above the national average. In 2001, results for an increased entry were above average, with one quarter of students achieving grades A and B, and most others achieving grade C. Grades achieved at AS-level by students now in Year 13 indicate that there is a trend of improvement.

100. Standards in Year 12 are average, overall. All students are making satisfactory progress. Female students are much more confident in oral work, which enables them to seek clarification of matters they do not fully understand and to participate more fully in discussion than male students. In writing, both male and female students make basic errors in using pronouns, auxiliary verbs and in making appropriate choices of vocabulary. Apart from oral confidence, there is no significant difference in the progress of male and female students.

101. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and show considerable maturity when talking about it. They are capable of personal research to expand their factual knowledge, accessing the Internet and benefiting from the authentic materials such as magazines and video clips. They are generally keen to take part in discussions, using their factual knowledge well to challenge or defend arguments. They express appreciation of the efforts of teachers to make lessons interesting and keep them informed of their progress towards good A-level grades. Recruitment for French is modest. Those students intending to continue into Year 13 generally do so.

102. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and very good in Year 13 where they have a significant effect on standards. Teachers use their language expertise effectively to provide a model and raise expectations. No use of English is tolerated in lessons, so that students make regular progress in developing their oral skills. In addition, the constant exposure to the foreign language develops their listening skills. In the best lessons, students participate in a variety of activities which accelerate their learning. In Year 12, there is not so much pace, and a considerable amount of repetition in fairly unchallenging activities. Teachers' language expertise is not as secure. As a result, students are not yet making the good progress anticipated by their GCSE grades. In both years, teachers make good use of authentic written and aural resources in the language to improve learning. Marking is particularly helpful, and provides useful reference points for future work. Students are usually well aware of their progress and of what they need to do to improve. This is due to very good procedures for tracking progress and to individual reviews.

103. The management of French within the joint sixth form is fragmented. Each school works independently. Consequently, teachers do not meet to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of provision. There is no sharing of ideas or good practice, and opportunities to learn from or assist colleagues are lost. Within individual schools, there is good management, so that the lack of co-operation does not affect progress. In two departments, there are particularly good procedures for assessing students' progress, which help their progress towards identified targets. There is no evidence of assessment data being used to improve schemes of work, but these have been very quickly mapped out in response to the requirements of the new courses. A weakness in sixth-form provision is the lack of any initiative for students to spend time abroad to further improve their linguistic and cultural development. As a result, their knowledge of contemporary French society is limited.