

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN PORT SCHOOL

Etwall, Derby

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112990

Headteacher: Mr Michael Crane

Reporting inspector: Mr Henry White
2795

Dates of inspection: 1 - 5 October 2001

Inspection number: 189826

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 - 19

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Main Street
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Barrie Whyman

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

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				How well does the school work with its parents?
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27492	John Barker	Team inspector		
4146	Roy Kent	Team inspector		
3552	David Darwood	Team inspector	History	What sort of school is it?
				How good the school is?
				Teaching and learning
				Curricular and other opportunities for students
				What should the school do to improve?
12568	Chris Morris	Team inspector	English Drama	
3549	David Oakley	Team inspector	Biology	
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28089	Tim Brotherhood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Psychology	
1347	Keith Blake	Team inspector	Geography	
4513	John Thirlwall	Team inspector	Art and design	
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23512	Pat Fisher	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?
17799	Anthony Stoddart	Team inspector	Physics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

John Port School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive foundation school serving a wide rural area around Etwall. Over 80% of the students travel to school by bus. It is a very large, popular, oversubscribed school with 2010 students on roll; 370 are in the sixth form. There are 101 students from minority ethnic backgrounds. One hundred and seventeen students are on the register of special educational need; this is well below the national average. Nineteen students have statements of special educational need for moderate, emotional and behavioural learning difficulties, dyslexia and speech and hearing impairment. The number of students with statements of special educational need is below the national average. The average attainment of students entering Year 7 is above average. Students currently need five passes at GCSE grades A* - C to enter the sixth form. Four per cent of the students have English as an additional language but they do not require any additional help to support their learning. Three quarters of the present sixth form students come from Year 11 and one quarter from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with many outstanding features. Standards are well above the national average, teaching is very good and leadership and management are outstanding. Overall, the school gives very good value for money. The very large sixth form is cost effective and provides excellent value for money. The school is fully staffed by well qualified teachers.

What the school does well

- Standards are well above average. Students' progress is good, often it is very good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- All students receive high quality guidance.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.
- The school forms very strong links with parents.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.

What could be improved

There are no significant weaknesses in this school. The school has a well structured Strategic Plan for its further development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Very good improvement has taken place since the school was last inspected in October 1996. The school has maintained its high standards at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Standards in Key Stage 4 are now well above the national average. Attendance has improved from average to well above average. The quality of teaching which was good in two thirds of lessons seen is further improved: in this inspection it was good or better in the majority of lessons and very good or excellent in over half of the lessons inspected. There is now very good provision for students with special educational needs. The provision of computers has

improved significantly since the last inspection. These improvements reflect the supportive procedures for quality assurance that have been developed since the last inspection:

- to improve the way in which guidance teams monitor the academic and personal development of the students,
- and ways in which the senior management team monitors and develops the quality of work of classroom teachers, tutors and middle managers.

Two key cultural shifts that have been introduced and are having a positive impact on standards are:

- the integration of all staff – both teaching and associate staff – into a single corporate team with clear roles and responsibilities which clearly focus on supporting students and raising standards, and
- the transformation from a traditional pastoral system to a guidance system which focuses on the academic and personal development of students.

Much has been done to improve the facilities for learning in the expressive arts, technology, business and vocational education, modern foreign languages and in the sixth form and to improve the overall internal and external refurbishment of the school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A		

At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above the national average. In science standards have been consistently well above the national average. In English and mathematics standards have varied between above the national average to well above. The unconfirmed data for 2001 shows improvements in the number of students gaining the higher level (Level 6) in English, mathematics and science.

GCSE and GCE A-level standards are also well above the national average. At Key Stage 4 students do particularly well in science, but less well in art and drama, compared to other subjects. In the sixth form standards are well above national average in design and technology, sports studies and physics, above average in English, mathematics, business studies history, geography, theatre studies, information and communication technology, chemistry, French and average in biology and art.

In no subjects are standards judged to be less than average. Although the trend over the last five years in the average improvement at Key Stage 3 is below the national trend, at Key Stage 4 it is above the national trend. At A-level the trend is upwards and in line with the national trend. The school has set itself the challenging target of raising the number of students gaining five GCSE grades A* - C from the current 63% to 70% and beyond. It is aiming at maintaining the high A-level average point score at 22 points while the new syllabuses are introduced.

These high standards are reflected in the quality of work seen during the inspection. In most lessons throughout the school, students' progress is good, often it is very good. Students with special educational needs make very good progress. The school has recently received a DfES award for school achievement, placing it in the top fifty improving schools nationally and emphasising its commitment to raising standards.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Students are very keen to succeed. They are enthusiastic, committed learners.
Behaviour in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. The rate of student exclusion is low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Students receive very good guidance and advice. The quality of relationships throughout the school is a major strength of the school
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average.

Students' attitudes and values strongly support their learning in all years. Incidents of bullying are rare and quickly addressed. The school promotes high attendance rates and monitors these effectively through the use of a swipe card system. The confidence and maturity of the sixth form students is impressive.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. At Key Stages 3 and 4 teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics and very good in science. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan their lessons to very high standards and successfully meet the needs of all students. A good range of teaching approaches is used and curriculum support staff are effectively deployed. Teachers assess their students well and the provision of homework is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In a small minority of lessons the teacher's introduction was too long. In a few lessons opportunities were missed to share well

thought out objectives with the class early in the lesson or to end with high quality question and answer sessions to check thoroughly on students' learning. Students of all ages and abilities work at a very good rate and their interest, concentration and independence are also very good. They apply good effort to their work, make good strides in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding in their subjects and have a good knowledge of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve further.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The well planned subject and guidance curriculum is supported by extensive extracurricular opportunities that make a significant impact on standards of achievement and personal development.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. The Curriculum Support department is very well co-ordinated. Associate staff are effectively deployed and students make very good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Many opportunities are provided for students to debate and reflect on spiritual, moral and social issues as well as for appreciating the diversity of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its students	Excellent. Very great care is taken to advise students about their personal and academic development and to keep them safe.

All students receive high quality guidance. The student council for Key Stages 3 and 4 makes a very effective contribution to the personal development of the students and plays a significant role in the development of the school. Opportunities and encouragement for students to engage more formally through the creation of a sixth form council are now needed. The school is still unable to offer a meaningful daily act of corporate worship. Religious education is not offered to all students in the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Members of the Senior Management team combine their considerable individual strengths to create a highly effective team in which relationships, trust in delegation and enthusiasm for work are notable.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors understand their role, the strengths and areas for improvement of their school and effectively support and challenge its performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are clear and effective monitoring procedures that inform school policies and guidelines.

Aspect (continued)	Comment (continued)
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Priorities are carefully costed and monitored to ensure the principles of best value are consistently applied in the pursuit of continuing whole school improvement.

The assistant headteachers and the heads of faculties and guidance co-ordinators support the senior management team very well. The leadership of the sixth form and the strategic management of all school finances are excellent. The very detailed five year Strategic Plan for building development recognises the need to improve the sports facilities in order to extend student access to the physical education programme and to replace the poor learning environment in Edale building.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards and good examination results. • The dedication and skill of the teachers. • The very detailed information they receive. • The individual support students receive. • The many learning activities outside the school day. • The very good quality of behaviour and the very positive relationships throughout the school. • The high quality of leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the students' annual reports. • The regular updating of target grades in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

The inspection confirms the strengths identified by parents. Annual reports are of sound quality but do not give sufficient detail on specific progress in subjects. The targets on the reports do not provide a precise agenda for making progress in learning. The inspection found that target grades are updated sufficiently frequently in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school has a sixth form of 370 students, with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. This is significantly bigger than the national average. It draws students from a wide geographical area extending from Derby to Burton and Uttoxeter. The school provides a wide range of subjects at A and A/S level as well as Advanced Vocational Certificate Of Education (AVCE) in Business. There are a small number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds all of whom speak English well. Three quarters of the present sixth form come from Year 11 and one quarter from other schools. Students' examination results prior to their entering the sixth form are well above the national average and the vast majority of students embark on two-year programmes leading to A-level or an AVCE qualification. There is currently an entry requirement of 5 A*-C grades at GCSE.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful in promoting both students' academic success and their personal development. Students make good progress and the majority achieve results higher than the national average. In addition to the accredited courses there is a wide range of extracurricular activities as well as an effective structured tutorial programme focusing on careers, entry into higher education, moral and social issues. In the 15 subjects inspected teaching was judged to be good overall. The number of students staying on into the sixth form and the number completing courses is very good. The sixth form is cost effective providing excellent value for money.

Strengths

- Students achieve above average results overall and show good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- Teaching is good throughout the sixth form. It is well planned and reflects strength of teachers' subject knowledge and a good understanding of the ways students learn.
- Leadership and management are very strong. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction in the work of the sixth form.
- Relationships are particularly good and help to create a caring and supportive ethos in which individuals are valued.
- Students receive very good advice and guidance.
- Students have a positive attitude to their work and the school in general.
- The sixth form provision gives excellent value for money.

What could be improved

There are no significant weaknesses in the current provision but the following is identified as an area where further development could enhance learning.

- Opportunities and encouragement for students to engage more formally in the school's development (through, for example, the creation of a sixth form council).

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are high. Results were slightly above the national average for 2001. The quality of teaching is very good and responses from students are excellent.
English	Very good. Standards have improved and results were above national average in 2001. The quality of teaching is very good and produces similar responses from students.
Biology	Good. Standards are in line with national averages. Students make good progress. Teaching is consistently at least satisfactory and sometimes excellent.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are in line with national averages. Teaching is good. An outstanding feature of the department is the relationships that exist between students and between students and staff.
Physics	Very good. Standards are above national averages. Teaching is good and students are well motivated. Teachers show good knowledge of their subject. Leadership in the department is good with the work of different teachers dovetailed to cover the whole of the required work.
History	Good. Teaching is consistently good across the department and students make good progress. Despite a drop in results in 2001 the overall trend is upwards and students achieve above national averages.
Geography	Good. Standards are above national averages. Teaching is good overall and there is good use of ICT to improve learning. Opportunities to further develop oral skills as an aid to understanding are, however, sometimes missed.
Business Studies	Good. Students reach standards comparable to the national average. Teaching is good although a greater variety of strategies could be employed to meet different learning needs.
Drama (Theatre Studies)	Very good. Results were much improved in 2001. The quality of teaching is very good as is extra-curricular provision.
Design and technology	Very good. Standards are significantly above national averages particularly in the higher A-level grades.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Information technology	Good. Standards have dropped slightly - in part due to changes in the ability of students following the course. However, overall achievement is higher than national averages and teaching is good.
Sports studies	Good. Standards are above national averages. There is high expectation which is balanced by a strong commitment to students who contribute readily and sustain motivation throughout lessons.
Psychology	Very good. Standards are above the national average and improving. Lessons are well prepared to develop critical and evaluative understanding and also an appreciation of the various research, vocabulary and methods. The quality of teaching is very good.
Art	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with national averages. Most students are capable of developing skills and understanding beyond present levels of attainment. Teaching is satisfactory but needs a sharper focus on skill development.
French	Good. Standards are above national averages. The quality of teaching is good and students respond very positively.

In other subjects work was sampled. Teaching was never less than good and very good in music, textiles and German.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There is a good induction programme for students into the sixth form including those coming from other schools. Minimum target grades are set for students and their progress is carefully monitored. They receive high quality support and guidance, particularly in Year 13. This is designed to support students in their preparation for careers options and opportunities beyond school.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management are excellent. There is a very good sense of direction and purpose. The staff responsible for overseeing the work of the sixth form carefully monitor and evaluate both policies and practice. The governors have a good insight into both the efficiency and effectiveness of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of courses available.• The quality of information given on courses.• The helpful way in which students are inducted into the sixth form.• The quality of teaching.• The support and advice given by subject staff.• The encouragement to study and work independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information provided on progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get.• Advice on careers and what to do after school.

Students are very positive about the sixth form both in terms of the choice of courses they can follow and the support and guidance they receive. The inspection confirms these opinions. The quality of relationships between staff and students is a major strength of the school. A small number of students expressed concerns that they were not well informed about their progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to achieve and advice about opportunities after leaving school. This was not confirmed by the inspection. Whilst there are times when students are unsure about the grades they might achieve, they are given minimum target grades and the tutorial system gives good advice on life after school. Students show confidence and maturity-a wonderful group of people to work with.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are well above average. Students' progress is good, often it is very good.

1. When students enter the school their ability is above average. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above the national average and students have made good progress. The results of national tests in science have been consistently well above the national average. In English and mathematics standards have always been above the national average; some years they have been well above. Over the last three years, boys and girls have performed equally well in English and science and made greatest progress in science. Progress has been slowest in mathematics where girls have made faster progress than boys. One of the responsibilities of the new heads of faculty for English and mathematics is to ensure that students consistently do as well in these subjects as in science. The unconfirmed test data for 2001 shows improvements in the number of students gaining the higher level (Level 6) in English, mathematics and science. In ICT standards that are well above the national average have been maintained, as have the above average standards in geography and history. There have been significant improvements in design and technology and modern foreign languages and standards in these subjects are now well above the national average. New arrangements are in place for the reporting of art and design, music and physical education and direct comparisons with previous years cannot be made.
2. GCSE standards are well above the national average. Although the average improvement over the last five years at Key Stage 3 is below the national trend, at Key Stage 4 it is above the national trend. When compared to their attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C and those gaining one or more passes at grades A*-G make good progress. Students gaining five or more passes at grades A*-G make very good progress. Although the results of boys and girls are well above the national average, girls obtain higher grades than boys overall. Over the last two years students have performed best in science compared to their other subjects; they have done less well in art and design and in drama.
3. In the sixth form standards are well above the national average in design and technology, sports studies, physics, above the national average in English, mathematics, business studies, history, geography, theatre studies, information technology, chemistry, French and average in biology and art and design. In no subjects are standards judged to be less than average. At A-level the trend in results is upwards and in line with the national trend. The school is aiming at maintaining the high A-level average point score at 22 points while the new syllabuses are being introduced.
4. These high standards in external tests and examinations are reflected in the quality of work seen throughout the school during the inspection. In most lessons all groups of students make good progress; in half of the lessons seen progress was very good. Students with special educational needs make very good progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. The high standards which the school achieves are linked to:
 - the very good teaching in lessons,

- the high quality of guidance which students receive through the way their progress is monitored by subject and guidance teams, and
 - the recognition by heads of faculty and guidance team leaders that they are accountable for the management of their teams and the standards which students attain in their subjects.
5. The school is determined to improve the performance in external tests and examinations still further. At Key Stage 3 the inconsistent performance in English and mathematics has resulted in students performing overall below the average of students in schools with similar numbers of students entitled to free school meals. At Key Stage 4, the average performance overall of students is above that in similar schools but the number of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A*-C is below the average for such schools. The school has therefore set itself the challenging target of raising the number of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* - C from the current 63% to 70% and beyond. A programme of meetings has been arranged with primary schools to ensure that the Key Stage 3 lessons in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology build on work and teaching approaches in the primary schools. Progress is already being made in this area. A Year 7 science lesson was observed which was clearly based on the prior subject knowledge that students had developed on light in the primary school. The lesson included high quality explanation and demonstration work followed by a substantial time for independent learning activities. The lesson concluded with a high quality question and answer session in which the teacher checked the understanding of the different ability groups of students in such a way that their learning was both consolidated and extended.
 6. The school is now extending its setting of targets for individual students to Key Stage 3. Based on the performance data that the school now has on students when they enter the school, minimum attainment levels have been identified for each student for all National Curriculum subjects. These are currently being discussed at subject and guidance team meetings, and are central to the school's strategy for setting overall performance targets for Key Stage 3.
 7. The school has also surveyed one third of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to explore their preferred learning styles. This extensive work has been well analysed and is currently being used by subject and guidance teams to review the structure and delivery of the curriculum.
 8. During the last year, a very detailed review has been carried out into the strategies used to assess students and the use that is made of assessment data across the school. This review has identified areas of good practice and also some areas where consistency needs to improve. Discussions are now underway with subject and guidance teams to ensure that the improvements in consistency are being achieved.
 9. The school has a proactive working party that is looking at a range of classroom strategies for improving the learning of all students, particularly boys at Key Stages 3 and 4. In some departments, after discussion at their team meetings, the head of faculty uses some non-contact time to work alongside under-achieving boys in the classroom and this is having a positive impact on standards. In a Year 11 English lesson the use of a variety of short activities successfully ensured that boys were all well motivated. In a Year 9 science lesson, the practical work was succinctly summarised on a single

page worksheet, ensuring that boys were swiftly engaged in their practical work. A second complementary worksheet extended this learning and successfully challenged and extended all students, including the boys.

Teaching is very good.

10. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Outstanding teaching and learning were observed in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In Key Stages 3 and 4 the quality of teaching is good in English and mathematics and very good in science. In Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching was excellent in nearly half of the lessons seen. In the sixth form teaching is very good in mathematics, English, design and technology, information technology, theatre studies and psychology and good in biology, chemistry, physics, history, geography, business studies, French and sports studies. Teaching is satisfactory in art and design.
11. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject throughout the school. Their knowledge is good in all A-level subjects. At Key Stage 4 teachers' knowledge of the GCSE coursework requirements in English, mathematics, science and history is having a significant impact on the way they help students improve their work. Lessons are always well planned. In a Year 7 French lesson, for example, very good planning ensured there was a good balance of listening, reading, speaking and writing. There was a good range of opportunities for students to speak French alone and as a group. The lesson was well resourced and good use was made of textbooks, the tape recorder and the white board to ensure that students learned at a good pace. A variety of activities ensured that students were fully engaged in their learning and the lesson was supported by homework containing a set of varied tasks that were closely linked to the work done in the lesson. Because of such good teaching, these students have made excellent progress in developing their oral and writing skills, their vocabulary and the use of nouns and verbs in the four weeks since the start of term.
12. Teachers give much thought to the teaching methods and the resources they will use. This motivates students and improves their learning and the standard of their work. Good use has been made of 'mind mapping' to help high achieving Year 11 students explore the complexities of the menstrual cycle in their science lessons. A Year 7 ICT lesson was presented in such a way that all students could make good progress irrespective of the level of ICT capability that they had developed at primary school. Spidergraphs were well used in a Year 7 religious education lesson to present key ideas about God. In a Year 9 drama lesson, the teacher gave good support to each of the working groups, enabling them to develop their ideas, identify the main themes and produce more sharply focused performances. In a Year 10 economics, politics and sociology lesson good use was made of well-selected articles about pressure groups taken from newspapers and from the Internet. In a Year 8 guidance lesson, work on the role of local government was very effectively supported by a newspaper produced by the local council. In geography some Year 9 students spent the first day of the inspection week undertaking fieldwork. This was effectively consolidated in a lesson later in the week. Clear references were made to National Curriculum levels and how the teachers' assessment of their work would be carried out. Students made good progress in their investigational skills and in their map and sketch work.

13. A hallmark of many lessons is the high quality of relationships that teachers have with their students. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the excellent relationships gave students the confidence to ask questions and seek support to improve their coursework. There was good informal discussion and assessment to move students forward. The teacher ensured that she spent some time with each student and this enabled good progress to be made. In another Year 11 mathematics lesson, this time with more able students, excellent relationships enabled the teacher to set very high expectations of the class. Students concentrated on their work and engaged in purposeful conversation. The consistently high level of intellectual effort from students resulted in high standards of work. The very good relationships that the curriculum support team has with students who have special educational needs made a significant contribution to the very good progress made by the students in improving their basic literacy skills.
14. In a small minority of lessons observed the following relative weaknesses were observed.
 - Occasionally teachers spend too long talking and introducing the lesson and this restricted the time for students to engage in the learning tasks they were given.
 - In some lessons, although the teacher had clear plans for what students were to learn, these learning objectives could have been explicitly shared with the students to give them a clear indication of what the teacher expected them to achieve by the end of the lesson.
 - In a few lessons the teacher missed the opportunity towards the end of the lesson to engage in questions and answers with students to check what they had learned during the lesson, to correct any misunderstandings and to extend what had been learned and what would be learned in future lessons.

Relationships are excellent throughout the school

15. Throughout the school, the teaching and associate staff are committed to working as a team to fulfil the school motto and ensure that all students are always provided with the best “opportunity to succeed”. Members of staff are committed and enthusiastic ambassadors for their subject and area of expertise. They work hard and are fully committed to the students in their care. The professional respect that all the adults have for each other, and the manner in which they relate to each other in public, are very powerful examples of the high quality of relationships the school expects from its students.
16. The relationships between students are also excellent. The sixth form students undertake many roles where they help the younger students at the school in lessons and around the school. In lessons seen, there were numerous examples of students working well together in small groups, in listening to each others’ points of view and working quietly because they respect the right of other students to be able to concentrate on their work. In their discussion with inspectors, student of all ages gave instances where other students had helped them during their time at the school. Because of these excellent relationships, the instances of bullying are rare.
17. Excellent relationships also exist between students and their teachers. Throughout the inspection, the mutual respect that students and teachers have for each other was clearly

evident. Each values the other as an individual. In subject and guidance teams, the staff provide an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that are appreciated and well attended, by students. These opportunities do much to develop the relationships between staff and students. The maturity of these two-way relationships is best exemplified by the working of the student council. This provides an excellent opportunity for two-way discussion in which the views of students are taken seriously and from which some significant improvements to school life result. The students have influenced the redistribution of lockers, the prioritisation of footpath improvements, a review on the procedures to address bullying, and the guidelines in the staff handbook regarding the need for consistency in the setting of homework and the organisation of detention. Opportunities and encouragement for sixth form students to engage more formally through the creation of a sixth form council are now needed. The level of mutual respect for each other and their joint commitment to the school is impressive.

All students receive high quality guidance.

18. Students receive excellent guidance throughout their time at the school. It begins with the impressive arrangements to welcome Year 7 students to the school. Much time is spent in feeder schools getting to know the transferring students and discussing their needs with their primary teachers. Teachers from the school also use these visits to administer commercial tests that are used to identify students' needs, and to inform the discussion with parents, before the national test results for 11 year-old students become available. Students value their Year 6 visit to the school; for many the size of the school can be daunting but the structure of the visit reassures students that they will be safe and there is always someone to help them should they lose their way. Students joining the sixth form from other schools also praise the procedures that help them to settle quickly into their studies. Parents speak highly of the manner in which the guidance teams help their children settle quickly at the school.
19. A strong feature of the guidance system is the continuity of support provided by tutors who move through the school from Year 7 to 11 with their group. At the end of Year 11, half of the guidance team move on to Year 12, whilst half return to Year 7 where they are joined by half of the Year 13 team. This ensures that the tutors know their students very well and have a very detailed whole-school view of the guidance process. They can also monitor all aspects of each student's development throughout the school and have an ongoing view of their academic and personal development.
20. The school has extensive ongoing records of each student's academic performance. Central to these records are the notions of a minimum target level that a student should achieve at Key Stage 3 and minimum target examination grade to be achieved at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Faculty and guidance teams review these ongoing records regularly and early intervention to support any underachieving pupil is quickly identified. A record of achievement for each student is central to the guidance programme. Students complete "A picture of me" when guidance staff visit their primary school and this is then used when the students begin Year 7. In all years students are given help to reflect on how well they are doing at school, their developing personal skills, their interests in and out of school, and their ongoing achievements. By the end of Year 11 an externally validated Record of Achievement is produced, which is of high quality. A particularly positive feature of this reflective process is the inclusion in each student's profile of the key skills of communication, numeracy, ICT,

problem solving, personal organisation and management of work and working with others.

21. Tutors teach the guidance programme to their group throughout the school and successfully ensure that work builds effectively year on year and is well matched to the needs of all students. Students receive a high quality guidance programme that addresses records of achievement, health matters, career education and guidance, self-awareness, citizenship and social responsibilities in a comprehensive way. Guidance teams have dedicated time in which to review and plan the structure of the programme. High quality lesson planning is expected, and the teaching is subject to the rigorous monitoring of all lessons throughout the school. Guidance teams are highly committed to this area of their teaching. In the guidance lessons inspected the quality of teaching and learning was consistently very good. Very good learning was taking place related to teasing and bullying (Year 7), essential local government services (Year 8), exploring career options (Year 9), preparing for, and presenting yourself at, interview (Year 11) looking at learning styles in the sixth form (Year 12) and understanding how to apply to university (Year 13). No observations of year 10 were made. There is a good linkage between the guidance programme and the assembly programme. Loneliness was a very appropriate theme for the Year 7 assembly where students were in their fifth week at a new school. Similarly the theme of 'Likes and Dislikes', stimulated by discussion of popular music groups and footballs teams, successfully raised important issues for Year 9 students who have major decisions to make regarding their future studies.
22. Teachers give high priority to the safety of students on this very large and exposed site and the 'swipe card' system for checking attendance at lessons makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the work of the school. The procedures for child protection are excellent. Health and safety arrangements are very good. Plans are in place to address the uneven footpaths and steps around the school.

Attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.

23. In the overwhelming majority of lessons, students' attitudes to their work and behaviour were exemplary. In four out of ten lessons students' attitudes and behaviour were excellent. In the lessons observed, students' attitudes and behaviour were never less than satisfactory. There is a very strong work ethic. Students work purposefully and are committed to doing well. They are enthusiastic learners who are interested in their work, and respond well to the very good teaching and the challenging and interesting activities they are set. Out of lessons behaviour is exceptionally good. Students move around the extensive site in an orderly manner and only a very small minority dawdle between lessons. There is very little jostling or pushing at crowded junctions or entrances to buildings. Lunch queues are always orderly. A pleasant atmosphere pervades the dining halls and there is little need for adult supervision. There is a purposeful atmosphere in the sixth form centre. Students concentrate hard when studying privately. At all times students were seen, they were well mannered to the visitors, opening doors and offering directions willingly. The new students in Year 7 report that all of the older students at the school had helped them learn to find their way around the school. During the week of the inspection no raised voices and no swearing were heard. Students have a very high regard for their school; little litter is dropped and the buildings are graffiti-free.

The school forms very strong links with parents.

24. The school has an excellent range of proactive and innovative strategies to develop the partnership with parents. When parents first contact the school, the documentation they receive is of very high quality. It is comprehensive, very detailed and this standard is maintained throughout the school. For example, the Year 10 information pack contains much which will help parents assist their children to do well at school. It contains extensive details about how students are grouped and who will be teaching each group. There is very detailed termly information for each subject showing the examinations board and syllabus details, what work will be covered each term, the coursework the student will have to do together with assessment details, key dates and deadlines for the next two years. Also included are:
- details of how to contact each examination board,
 - who to contact at school should there be subject-specific enquiries parents may wish to make,
 - information about the help available for students with special educational needs sitting GCSE examinations, and
 - a calendar showing all of the key dates for all subjects for the year.
25. Parents are also enabled to support their child fully with the information which is provided regarding:
- revision guides,
 - advice on how students should revise, an outline revision planner,
 - how to cope with examinations by understanding the key words used in GCSE questions and, finally,
 - how students can manage stress.
26. The commitment to work in partnership with parents is most clearly expressed in the Home-School Agreement that describes the relationship as a learning partnership. In this document, the school sets out its responsibility to its students, it highlights the expectations the school has of its students and outlines what it expects from the parents of its students.
27. The school invests much time in supporting parents through high quality curriculum evenings; and these are highly valued and supported by parents. Over three hundred parents recently attended an evening to help them support the school in raising the achievement of all students at Key Stage 3. The evening began with focused presentations about monitoring students' progress, students' attitudes to learning, learning styles and the central role of the Record of Achievement in the work of the Guidance Teams at the school. There followed a range of activities to assist parents to support their children in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. The use of the internet to support learning at home was highlighted. Parents could also find out about encouraging their child to read, the school's guided reading project and the work of, and strategies used by, the curriculum support team. The inputs involved teachers and associate staff at the school. The value of the presentations and the quality of the associated documentation was highly praised at the meeting the inspectors held with parents prior to the inspection.

28. The school has a range of strategies to involve parents in the ongoing development of the school. Students' reports have a comments slip to be completed, as do the termly newsletters to parents. Questionnaires are often circulated at meetings with parents and the views of every parent are sought through a letter from the headteacher regarding the proposals for the school's next strategic plan. The strategic plan is always discussed fully at the governors' annual meeting for parents. The school also held a meeting in July 2001 to talk about forward planning. The meeting title was 'A school of quality - the next three years.'
29. The school sets clear targets for responding to parental contact. Concerns can be left on the answer phone when school is closed. Otherwise, on parent's contacting the school, members of the general office staff inform them who will deal with the matter and the school attempts to reply to the parent within 24 hours. Parents know that they can request an interim comment from all staff if they have concerns about any aspects of their child's academic or personal development, and that such requests will be collated and returned to parents within ten working days.
30. The response from parents to "their" school is excellent. A very active Parent Teachers Association (PTA) has enthusiastically supported the school's aspirations to achieve Technology College status and over £10,000 has been raised for this project. Moreover the parent body has contributed a further £8,000 this term through voluntary pledges following an appeal. Eight of the 21 governors are parents of students at the school and the governing body is therefore well informed on parental views. The meeting with the inspectors was well attended; parents had come to confirm, "their school was a very good school". The return rate of over 900 questionnaires to the inspection team is unusually high. In responding to the questionnaire, it is clear that the parent body is very well satisfied with their school, and the high priority it places on working with parents. They do have one criticism of the school. They would like to have more subject-specific information regarding their child's progress and more subject-specific targets to help their child do better at school. Inspectors support this shortcoming in school reports that are otherwise of a sound standard.

Leadership and management are outstanding.

31. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteachers and the director of finance, provides inspirational leadership and management. The individual strengths and areas of responsibility of the senior management team combine to create a very effective whole school team in which relationships, trust in delegation and enthusiasm for their work are notable. The school's aims and mission statement provide a very clear sense of direction and vision for staff, governors, students and parents. They ensure that all strategic planning and priority setting focus sharply on the continual improvement of teaching and learning and the standards which students attain.
32. Much has been achieved since the last inspection in 1996. High standards have been maintained and improved further, attendance has improved considerably, the quality of teaching and learning is now very good. There is now very good provision for students with special educational needs. These improvements reflect the supportive procedures for quality assurance that have been developed since the last inspection:

- to improve the way in which guidance teams monitor the academic and personal development of their students,
 - and by which the senior management team monitors and develops the quality of work of classroom teachers, tutors and middle managers.
33. Two key cultural shifts that have been introduced and which are having a positive impact on standards are:
- the integration of all staff – teaching and associate staff – into a single corporate team with clear roles and responsibilities which focus on supporting students and raising standards, and
 - the transformation from a traditional pastoral system to a guidance system which focuses on the academic and personal development of students.
34. The senior management is very well supported by the four assistant headteachers who have clearly defined whole school developmental roles. These roles include helping staff make better use of performance data, the induction of new staff, the development of the graduate teacher scheme, curriculum planning for citizenship, leading the school debate on how to raise the attainment of boys and girls, public relations, health and safety, records of achievement and the extension of the work related curriculum. Faculties and guidance teams receive very good leadership from their team leaders, who recognise their dual responsibility for ensuring that they get the best out of their teams so that students gain the most from their time at school. They value their contribution to the decision-making processes at the school and recognise their accountability to the governing body. The head of sixth form provides excellent leadership and management for her guidance team. She is supported by a very capable deputy in providing a clear sense of purpose and direction in post-16 work. Much attention has been paid to the appointment and training/development of talented team leaders and this is now paying dividends in terms of examination results.
35. The director of finance and support services has ensured that the management of all school finances is excellent. The principles of best value are always applied to financial decisions that are focused on improving teaching and learning and raising standards of attainment. Strategic financial planning is projected for several years ahead in a flexible manner that can readily react to the changing financial climate within which the school operates. The school has a very detailed five-year strategic plan for its buildings and significant improvements in accommodation have been achieved for expressive arts, technology, business and vocational education, modern foreign languages and the sixth form block since the last inspection. Major planned projects include improving the provision of computers to support learning throughout the school by means of a Technology College bid, to improve the sports facilities, possibly through lottery funding and to replace Edale building. These developments are needed to improve the quality of cross-curricular ICT and to extend the student access to the range of activities currently offered within the physical education curriculum.
36. Major developments are thoughtfully researched and planned well in advance in meticulous detail. External assessors have made very positive reports when reviewing the school approaches to the Management of Teacher Performance, Health and Safety and for the Investor In People award. In the summer of 2001 the school achieved the prestigious Artsmark Gold, awarded by the Arts Council for exceptional work in the

expressive arts. Much research has been carried out into the various approaches to teaching and assessing key skills in the sixth form. The school has wisely decided to focus on maintaining the high level of performance in the new A level GCE courses until a clearer national picture emerges regarding the accreditation of key skills.

37. The work of the governing body is excellent. They know their role, the strengths and areas for improvement of their school and effectively support and challenge its performance. They have established effective links with faculties and guidance teams, and team leaders are expected to make presentations to the governors about the work of their teams. They have established an appropriate financial and developmental planning cycle, the high point of which is the annual discussion regarding examination results. Parents are often consulted about major planned developments and the long-term strategic plan. From time to time they have a conference which supports the work of new governors, considers how new national initiatives might impact upon their strategic planning and gives quality time for reflection on the need to guarantee sustained improvement and high quality education for all students.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

38. There are no areas of significant weakness in this school. Reference has already been made to the following matters:
- Plans are in hand to ensure consistently high performance in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 and to raise further performance at Key Stage 4, particularly of boys.
 - The need, in a minority of lessons, to review the balance of time allocated to teacher introduction compared to students working, and to make more use made of sharing learning objectives with students and using question and answer sessions to establish and extend student understanding.
 - The creation of a sixth form council to provide opportunities and encouragement for sixth form students to engage more formally with their teachers.
 - The need for reports to have more subject-specific information regarding progress and more subject-specific targets for improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. There are no significant weaknesses in this school. The school has a well structured Strategic Plan that it is using for its further development. This includes:
- i. continuing to raise standards at Key Stages 3 and 4;
 - ii. sustaining the present ratio of staff to students;
 - iii. ensuring that current programme of staff ICT training enhances teaching and learning in the classroom;
 - iv. maintaining the current programme of improving the buildings and the school site, seeking major funding sources whenever possible.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	34
	Sixth form	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	10	10	12	2	0	0	0
Percentage	30	30	25	6	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages for Years 7 – 11 as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Sixth form

Number	5	24	20	11	0	0	0
Percentage	8	40	33	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1640	370
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	56	2

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	140	1

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	88

Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	157	149	306

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	131	117	136
	Girls	137	120	116
	Total	268	237	252
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	88 (76)	77 (75)	82 (73)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (41)	50 (50)	46 (42)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	112	102	118
	Girls	132	111	123
	Total	244	213	241
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (76)	70 (77)	79 (75)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (34)	44 (47)	42 (46)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	153	146	299

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	81	147	148
	Girls	108	144	147
	Total	189	291	295
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	63 (69)	97 (99)	99 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48.3
	National	38.4

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	80	77	157

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	21.6	20.1	20.8	1.5	0	1.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	9	100
	National		85

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	0
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	56
Pakistani	32
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1858
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	40	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	117
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.17

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	517

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.8
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Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	5661903
Total expenditure	5588141
Expenditure per pupil	2867
Balance brought forward from previous year	10696
Balance carried forward to next year	84458

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5.35
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	1956
Number of questionnaires returned	941

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	54	5	2	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	50	4	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	60	5	1	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	57	14	2	10
The teaching is good.	25	61	3	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	48	15	2	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	46	4	2	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	35	2	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	13	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	43	46	2	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	3	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	47	6	1	14

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

40. Entry into sixth form is currently dependent upon students achieving five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects at A*-C. This has recently been amended to students achieving on average a GCSE point score of five per subject. There is, however, a degree of flexibility. Students who are judged to be capable of coping with the demands of sixth form courses may be admitted without necessarily meeting the entry criteria. Students do have the chance of retaking GCSE courses if appropriate and progress is carefully monitored.
41. Overall standards in the sixth form are very good. The school consistently performs better than the national average both in terms of A-level grades and average point scores. This is also true for results at A/S level and in the Advanced General National Vocation Qualification (GNVQ) in business. Students' knowledge and skills are well developed, well beyond what might typically be expected. The overall trend in results since the last inspection has been steadily upwards, in line with results nationally but from a higher starting point. The number of students reaching the higher A-level grades of A/B are also consistently better than in schools nationally. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls at this level with the exception of biology, where boys perform better than girls. Students of minority ethnic background achieve as well, and in many cases better, than other students.
42. In the focused subjects of the inspection standards compared with national averages are very high in design and technology, information technology, sports studies and physics, high in mathematics, English, business studies, history, geography, theatre studies, chemistry, French, and average in biology and art. In no subject are standards judged to be less than average. All students have the opportunity to follow a general studies course to A/S or A level and results in this area, although slightly less than average have shown an upward trend during the past four years.
43. The school specifically does not set targets for the number of students expected to complete courses. It believes that if its selection and guidance procedures are satisfactory then students will complete the course. As it is, students' retention rates are excellent. Very few students drop out of the sixth form and those that do, wherever possible, are carefully counselled to ensure that they move to appropriate education or employment provision.
44. The school has high expectations for its students both in terms of their academic progress and personal development. It sets appropriate and challenging targets for individual students based on their average point scores in GCSE. These targets are arrived at after very careful analysis data on entry. All students are also given a minimum target grade. In each subject these are regularly monitored and reviewed. This enables the school to identify both individual and whole school progress towards targets. Remedial action is taken, if necessary, either through individual tutoring or targeting of vulnerable groups. This is generally very effective. Although the whole school target for 2001 was not quite reached a lot of support and advice was given to

students both academically and pastorally. The 2002 target is higher than previous years and the 2001 A/S results, although unconfirmed, indicate that the school is on line to achieve them. Value-added studies show that most students in recent years have made more progress than their baseline performance on entry would typically suggest.

45. Students make good progress overall. Evidence from students' work shows that most attain good results in comparison to prior performance in GCSE and the percentage of students reaching the higher grades indicates that the more able respond well to the teaching opportunities provided.
46. The school does not specifically enter students for accreditation in key skills. These skills are currently taught within the context of the subject being studied. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the school is successful in developing students' key skills. Literacy skills are good. Students write well, being able to access a range of sources and produce well structured assignments. In the best lessons students are encouraged to participate in whole class discussion. For example, in a Year 13 psychology lesson students held a lively debate on obsessive compulsive disorder. Students are confident and articulate although in some subjects opportunities for whole class discussions through which students could deepen their understanding and analytical skills are missed.
47. Lack of opportunities to develop ICT skills more effectively were identified in the last inspection report. Since then the school has made a substantial investment both in terms of equipment/facilities and training. Most students are competent ICT users both in producing quality word-processed assignments and in researching and using information. There is good access to ICT both within the sixth form accommodation and across the school. Subjects actively encourage the use of ICT for example, in design and technology, sports studies, business studies, biology, geography and in history enquiry skills are actively encouraged through the use of the Internet.
48. Numeracy skills are sufficiently well developed to ensure that students are able to complete A-level assignments that might require complex number work. If there are difficulties staff are careful to explain and develop students' skills. For example, in a Year 13 chemistry lesson students were well supported in number work whilst working on instrumental techniques. In a Year 13 biology lesson good teaching allowed students to produce, analyse and compare normal distribution curves whilst looking at work on variation.
49. The students' success ensures that most secure, relevant and appropriate opportunities after the sixth form. In 2001 72% of students went into Higher Education, 11% into employment and 10% into other areas of training including taking a 'gap year' before entering Higher Education or employment.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

50. Students have very positive attitudes to the school and to their work. They are keen to attend their lessons and value highly the support provided by staff. Students are interested in the life of the school and many maintain their involvement in extra curricular activities, particularly in music and drama.

51. Behaviour in the fifty-five lessons observed during the inspection was of a very high standard. In fifteen lessons behaviour was judged to be good. It was very good in twenty-three and exemplary in nineteen. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen. Students maintain these very high standards of behaviour out of the classroom. They are expected to act as role models for younger students and rise well to the challenge. Having been involved in choosing the sixth form uniform, almost all wear it with pride. They treat the sixth form building with due respect and the common room is kept very clean and tidy.
52. The very good quality of relationships that exist between students and their peers and staff and younger students is outstanding and a major strength of the school. Students are confident, mature young people, able to foster very good relationships with others. The high quality of relationships helps to ensure that there is little bullying or other oppressive behaviour. The sixth form is a harmonious and co-operative community. Students understand the impact of their actions on others and are respectful towards others. They are willing to take responsibility. For example, students are encouraged to spend one free period each week helping in classes in Years 7, 8 and 9 in English, mathematics, and physical education and learning support. Although the school has an active whole school student council there is currently no dedicated sixth form council to focus on specific sixth form issues.
53. Students are interested and enthusiastic learners. They develop good learning skills, aided by the work in tutorial lessons about learning styles. In the lessons seen, students were very focused on their tasks. Students are able to work independently for sustained periods of time and also work very well together in small groups. For example in theatre studies, they collaborated extremely well to produce an interpretation of montage and provided very supportive, useful comments on the work of others. Students are confident learners who rise well to the high level of challenge seen in some lessons. They are able to take responsibility for their own learning, as seen in Year 12 in a geography lesson where students were preparing an environmental investigation and in physical education where the research task enabled them to work independently.
54. Levels of attendance are high. Last year attendance was 92 per cent overall. Students are expected to attend all lessons and attendance is effectively monitored using an electronic swipe-card system.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

55. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good with examples of excellent teaching observed. It is the quality of teaching that leads to effective learning and good progress in subjects.
56. The good teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge and high expectations of students' performance. This is coupled with carefully planned and well-structured lessons, which employ a range of different strategies. These are designed to develop critical and evaluative understanding as well as providing a variety of approaches to engage and motivate students. Lessons involve whole class presentations by the teacher, where sharing of learning objectives and the clarity of explanation mean that students know exactly what is expected of them. There is also effective use of small

group and paired work, which at its best, actively develops students' oral skills. Students' research skills are promoted through the use of individual investigative work using a range of sources including wide use of ICT. The latter is used to produce high quality word-processed material and also to give access to the Internet and help students develop their analytical skills. Very good examples were seen in students' work in design and technology, sports studies, history, business studies and biology. Over a period of time, the range of teaching methods used is varied and stimulates a wide range of learning skills including students' capacity to carefully select, critically analyse and make evaluations of work. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson on *Othello* careful examination of the text enabled students to identify that it is difficult to form a definitive view of Iago's motivation in betraying Othello.

57. Staff create a relaxed, supportive yet challenging ethos within lessons. Teachers generally seek to improve not only students' academic results but also to foster a sense of enjoyment in the learning. Relationships are, as a consequence, very positive and do much to inspire a belief that students can achieve and instil confidence in their learning. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson on sonnets skilful use of praise and encouragement led more reticent students to become involved in discussion on the poet's use of technique, imagery and symbolism. One of the strengths of effective teaching at the school is the way in which many staff do not simply accept responses to questions but probe for clarification and justification of particular viewpoints. For example, in a Year 12 history lesson on the "July Monarchy" the teacher pushed students to ensure that they could demonstrate with evidence that the regime became more representative and provide examples to prove their case. Adult issues are dealt with in a sensitive way. For example, in a Year 12 psychology lesson students were introduced to Freud's theory of dreams and sexual symbolism. This was subsequently discussed by the students in a calm, detached and scientific manner.
58. One of the reasons for effective teaching is the way many staff give systematic attention to students' past experiences, knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 12 French lesson the teacher introduced a session on adverbs and adverbial phrases by carefully building upon students past knowledge developed during their GCSE courses in order to introduce more complex ideas. This gave students the confidence that they could do the different assignments, not only consolidating but introducing new work.
59. Staff often link learning to students' own awareness of the world in which they live. This gives more relevance and interest to work. For example, in a Year 13 history lesson on the impact of public opinion on the French Monarchy, the teacher asked students to reflect on the impact on the public today of the September 11th terrorist attacks on America. How did public opinion react? How did moods change? How far did they feel government reacts to, or leads, public mood?
60. The school is aware of the need to develop students' skills of independent learning. This is not only fostered by individual research for pieces of work, as seen in experiments in chemistry, and homework assignments in physics and psychology but also in the use of study guides and long-term assignments. These often require structured planning and time-management in order to meet all the assessment criteria within the time frame given. For example, work in Year 13 information technology and Year 12 history was set which enabled more able students to work at their own

pace whilst giving time for the teacher to give more individual advice and support to others.

61. In a few lessons pressure to meet the demands of the syllabus occasionally led to over-directive teaching where students were only expected to give short response answers. In some cases this led to lesson plenaries where the teacher told the students what they had done rather than get them to review and reflect on what they had learned. This was, however, only seen in a minority of lessons.
62. The use of 'minimum target grades' and the frequent use of both formal and informal monitoring enables students to recognise both their strengths and areas for development. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson, despite the fact that they were only into the fourth week of their course, students were able to comment on their progress and identify weaknesses in their learning. Observations in lessons as well as scrutiny of student work also shows teachers' very effective use of diagnostic comments to support students. At times, however, the students are less able to relate their progress in work to specific grade criteria.
63. Communication skills are well developed and fostered in most areas - particularly in English, French and theatre studies where most students were able to demonstrate confident, independent, well informed thinking and to articulate this well to others, reaching a considered and agreed conclusion. In other areas, there is a focus on developing written skills via the use, for example, of writing frames in history which help students structure their essays and avoid simply narrative descriptions of events. In biology and physics a range of source material is provided to encourage learning. There is also some evidence of students being actively encouraged to read around subjects. For example, in a Year 12 lesson in history looking at 19th Century social and living conditions students were encouraged to read specific fiction work such as Dickens and Gaskell. This is an area which could be further developed in other subjects.

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

64. The curriculum of the school for the sixth form meets statutory requirements with the exception of religious education and collective worship. There is a broad range of A/S and A-level subjects as well as opportunities to follow advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) courses. This enables students to follow a broader curriculum in Year 12 before committing themselves to specific A-level qualifications in Year 13. In addition all students in Year 12 follow a GCE A/S level course in general studies and Year 13 students can continue to gain full A-level certificates. There is also a well-structured and planned tutorial programme which helps prepare students, not only for life in the sixth form but also for life beyond the school. The quality of teaching and individual support in these lessons is good. Tutors clearly know their students well and the system whereby tutors take their form through Year 12 and Year 13 strengthens this. In a Year 13 lesson a tutor was discussing how the student should write their own personal statement for applications and stressed the need to identify, not just what the student had done, but what she had learned from the experience.

65. Students are carefully guided and inducted into the sixth form - both those from within the school and those entering from other institutions. There are clear entry requirements but these have a degree of flexibility in individual cases. If problems arise there is good monitoring and counselling provision either to resolve issues or, in some circumstances find more appropriate courses or opportunities. There are currently no students with defined special educational needs in the sixth form.
66. Whilst the school has decided not to introduce a specific key skills teaching programme it does carefully check, both via the tutorial system and within subjects, that students have the necessary skills to successfully take part in and complete courses. In some years, if appropriate, the school arranges for students to be tutored prior to re-sitting English and mathematics GCSE courses. During the inspection there was no evidence that students lacked the necessary communication, numeracy or ICT skills to fulfil their course requirements. Indeed these skills are progressively developed within individual subjects.
67. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities including music, art and dance, drama, cultural visits, residentials, overseas exchanges and sport. Students value these opportunities and the uptake is good. This provision does much to enrich the overall curriculum provision for students. The only weakness here, identified by the students, was the lack of sporting opportunities for girls - especially recreational sport. Whilst the school does offer opportunities for students to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards' scheme there are relatively few additional recreational courses available in physical education despite this being a very strong and effective faculty.
68. Opportunities for students' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are generally very good. The school places a high priority on establishing good relations amongst the whole school community. All members are valued and their contribution recognised and rewarded. For example, the sixth form requested additional ICT facilities and were prepared to raise part of the money themselves through a range of events and activities. The school promised to match fund whatever was raised. The result was a £6,000 computer suite, which has done much to increase private and independent study as well as establish the sixth form as clear stakeholders in the life of the school. However, despite the sixth form being actively involved in school life there is currently no representative formal forum through which they can express their views. This is an issue identified by the school and is in the process of being addressed.
69. Careers and Higher Education opportunities are well catered for in the Tutorial Programme and there are frequent opportunities for students to visit universities and other post-school training providers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

70. The regular assessment of students begins as soon as they enter the sixth form and includes all subjects except personal and social education. They are given a target minimum grade for their A-levels based on their performance in the GCSE

examinations and their progress towards it is then regularly reviewed during the two year course.

71. Subject tutors have a very clear academic oversight of the students in their care who value the individual support provided by teachers. Information about academic progress is regularly shared with the sixth form pastoral staff who provide individual progress reviews for all students. When any problems are identified they are followed up closely and parents are involved as appropriate. An annual report of progress is provided for parents and those with parental responsibility during May (Year 12) and January (Year 13). Reports are detailed and include comments on each subject, together with those of the form tutor and student. Parents have the opportunity to comment in writing on the report.
72. The system is open and straightforward and ensures that all the relevant information is gathered together and then shared and discussed with the people who need to know. It is then used to ensure that students make the best possible progress. The process has a very positive impact on standards.

Advice, support and guidance

73. The process of induction into the sixth form is effective and valued both by students moving through the school and by those joining the sixth form from other schools. The school provides students with high quality advice and guidance so that they are able to make well-informed choices about their courses of study. When students are starting their sixth form courses, tutors are available to offer support and advice, especially for those who are considering a change of course. The sixth form tutors teach the comprehensive tutorial programme. This is well planned and relevant to students' needs but is more appreciated by students in Year 13 than by those in Year 12. This regular contact with students enables form tutors to get to know all their students very well, providing a firm basis for individual help and guidance both on academic and personal matters. Form tutors also use the tutorial time to discuss students' personal development and to deal with administrative matters.
74. The tutorial programme includes advice about Higher Education and information on degree courses. Form tutors support students effectively when they complete university entrance forms. The careers service offers individual interviews to those seeking to enter work after completing their sixth form course. Other students have access to the careers officer at the weekly drop-in clinic or by appointment. Students value highly the programme of guidance about options after A-levels and state that it is well matched to their needs.
75. Form tutors and the sixth form directors all know the students well and are readily available to offer personal advice and support. There is an open door policy and students appreciate the easy access they have to staff. Guidance staff will refer students to other agencies, for example the school nurse, if and when appropriate. Students are supported very effectively throughout their time in the sixth form by a well-informed and committed team.

Health and safety

76. The school has very good procedures and policies in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of every member of the school community, including the sixth form. Child protection procedures are fully in place and comply fully with legal requirements. All staff are aware of them. The sixth form benefits from the very good attention paid to monitoring health and safety throughout the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

77. Parents express overall satisfaction with the quality and range of the sixth form provision and are very supportive of the school's post-16 provision. Parents receive a well-presented sixth form information pack containing a wealth of relevant detail. They are pleased with the range of courses on offer and with the high level of individual support their children receive. They appreciate the high standards the school achieves. Parents receive a clear and informative annual report on the progress of their child and are appropriately involved when concerns arise.
78. Students are very positive about the sixth form. They particularly appreciate the induction programme and the constructive advice they receive about the courses they choose. Students are happy that the choice of courses available to them is appropriate to their needs and aspirations, that they receive good advice and that the printed information is useful. Those transferring into the sixth form from other schools are as positive about the induction process as those moving on within the school. They believe that they are well taught and that their teachers are accessible to discuss difficulties as they arise. Students state that they are helped to settle into the sixth form and to develop their research and independent study skills. They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults and would advise others to join the sixth form. Despite these positive views, a small minority expresses concerns that they are not well informed about their progress in relation to the qualifications they need in order to follow their chosen course after school. Inspection evidence does not support this. A similar minority feels that they are not well advised about what they should do after leaving school. However, the evidence from the inspection does not support this concern. Advice is readily available from school staff and the careers officer about Higher Education, while information for those who want to go from the sixth form into work is available to all students on request.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

79. The sixth form has its own clear sense of direction which complements that of the whole school. The high quality leadership of the director and her deputy has led to the setting of rigorous development targets, the promotion of very high standards, a team ethos and an atmosphere where continuous improvement is the norm.
80. The priorities for development in the sixth form reflect the principles embraced by the whole school, for example:

- ensuring that guidance systems reflect current need,
 - that methods of monitoring student progress are fine-tuned
 - that the new curriculum is fully evaluated.
81. Governors are fully involved in sixth form developments via the headteacher who fulfils the role of link governor, for example they have recently helped to formulate the new admissions policy. The aims and values of the sixth form have evolved over time and are implicit in all aspects of its work. An explicit statement of these would be of value in assisting in future planning.
82. The expectations of students joining the sixth form are high. It is expected that they will complete the two year course unless it is in their interests not to do so and that they will then go on to Higher Education or employment. Their target minimum grade for GCE A-level is monitored throughout their course and strategies put in place to help them achieve it. It is also expected that the sixth form results will be at least maintained in the future and the aim is for them to improve further.
83. The school ensures that all faculties deliver to the same high standard and that the performance of all teaching staff is monitored in line with school policy. Strategic middle-management appointments in recent years have been instrumental in helping to raise standards. The sixth form management team and the tutors have very clearly defined roles, all of which are linked to the raising of standards and the support for students. There are clear guidelines given to subject teachers on the information needed by tutors, as well as how this information is to be used to monitor students' progress
84. The open door policy adopted by sixth form staff and the very positive student/staff relationships, ensure that students have the confidence to talk to staff about any concerns that they might have. The formation of a sixth form student council, currently being considered, would also help to develop the role that students play in their learning.
85. The financial resources allocated to the sixth form are in proportion to the income which it generates. Within the sixth form, money is allocated according to the principles of best value adopted for the whole school which are open and explicit. The success of the process can be measured by the increased number of students choosing to study in the sixth form (including 25% from other schools), the progress that students make, and the very good examination results. Consideration is already being given to planning for the new funding arrangements due to be in place for September 2002.
86. The sixth form gives excellent value for money.

Resources

87. Sixth form students are taught by well-qualified staff who have a high level of expertise in their specialist subject, both in terms of their academic knowledge and the requirements of the Examination Boards. They are generally taught in well-equipped faculty suites although some science laboratories provide less than satisfactory accommodation and limited indoor facilities restrict curricular opportunities in physical education.

88. Students have adequate facilities for independent study and use them well. In the Sixth Form Centre, which is in a separate building at the heart of the school site, there are four individual study areas, an open-plan central area and a computer network. They also have open access to the school's Resource Centre which comprises well-stocked library and computer facilities. The resource centre manager is available to help them access information for research projects. The centre also has links with other schools and the University Library in Derby.

89. Resources have a very positive impact on learning.

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

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

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

GCE A/S level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	3	0	63	0	17	0	1.6
Music	2	100	87	100	30	4.0	2.4
Psychology	1	100	70	0	18	1.0	1.7

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design A-level	12	75	96	42	45	4.8	6.4
Biology A-level	57	86	88	28	34	4.8	5.3
Business Studies A-level	37	89	91	27	30	5.1	5.3
Chemistry A-level	35	89	89	43	42	5.7	5.8
Theatre Studies A-level	9	100	93	0	30	3.7	5.4
ICT A-level	24	100	85	38	23	6.7	4.5
English Literature A-level	36	100	96	25	36	5.8	5.9
English Language A-level	1	100	92	0	31	4.00	5.3
French A-level	7	100	91	14	39	4.5	5.7
Full Design and Technology A-level	10	100	92	50	29	6.8	5.3
General Studies A-level	150	69	85	18	28	3.7	4.8
Geography A-level	17	100	92	53	37	7.0	5.7
German A-level	3	100	92	33	41	6.6	5.8
History A-level	21	100	89	38	34	6.2	5.4
Mathematics A-level	67	90	89	43	45	6.0	5.4

GCE A-level and AVCE courses (continued)

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Music A-level	5	100	93	60	35	7.6	5.7
Psychology A-level	23	96	89	35	31	6.4	5.1
Economics A-level	1	100	88	100	35	8.0	5.3
Physics A-level	29	93	88	55	41	6.7	5.7
Sociology A-level	7	100	88	14	37	3.7	5.4
Spanish A-level	4	100	90	100	40	9.0	5.7
Sports /PE Studies A-level	16	100	91	50	25	6.3	4.9

No students were entered for intermediate vocational qualifications in 2000

Advanced vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business and Finance	9	89		89		67	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in mathematics and further mathematics. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level courses in mathematics and further mathematics. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of faculty and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in Biology. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of subject and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A level in chemistry. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 AS level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 13 and one in Year 12 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of subject, talks with

individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 chemistry students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in physics. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students work, discussion with the head of subject and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards are high, with A-level results a little above the national average and Further Maths and A/S Level results well above the national average.
- Students have a sound grasp of concepts and apply them well in a variety of contexts.
- Teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and structured and teachers use their extensive subject knowledge to the benefit of the students.

Areas for improvement

- A lack of suitable texts for the new modular AS/A2 course.

Standards and achievement

90. The mathematics faculty serves its sixth form students well. Results at A-level over the past three years have risen steadily in line with the national trend and are consistently at or a little above the national average. In both further mathematics and A/S level, results are well above the national average. Boys and girls study mathematics in similar numbers and there is little difference between their results.
91. The standard of work seen in lessons and in books and folders confirms this high standard. The overall quality of students' work is above average and male and female students do equally well. Students have a good understanding of mathematical principles and rules and are able to apply these in a variety of situations with high levels of success, for example when using algebraic methods to sketch the graphs of polynomial expressions or to represent expressions as partial fractions. By Year 13, students are developing into competent mathematicians. They are able to apply the mathematical skills that they have learned, not just from Year 12, but also from the whole of their mathematical experience. When using the binomial theorem in solving set problems, they clearly demonstrated their competence in more simple forms of algebra and in the application of number as a key skill. Similarly when writing complex algebraic expressions as partial fractions, their understanding of simple fractions was key to their success. Students in Year 12 are relatively new to the course and some were surprised at how difficult the transition from GCSE was. The majority, however, find the course challenging but very stimulating and are achieving high levels of success. This was particularly evident in a group that was sketching graphs of polynomial functions using differential calculus to find maximum and minimum points and to place the axes for the graphs. A group of very able students was given some

problems related to velocity and acceleration after completing the planned work for the lesson. This was an area that they not been exposed to before, but they very confidently tackled the problems and found appropriate solutions. They have responded well to being expected to take greater responsibility for their own learning and are well able to use their knowledge to experiment and seek solutions. Students use algebra with confidence and are able to discuss and explain their methods when asked to do so. Coursework seen, particularly in mechanics, is of very high quality.

Quality of education

92. Teaching is very good overall. Consequently, in both A and A/S level courses, students learn well. Lessons are well prepared and planned and generally have clear objectives. They are structured to enable the teachers to reinforce key concepts. Expectations are high and teachers provide appropriate challenges and expect students to work at a very fast pace. The ability demonstrated by teachers to use their extensive subject knowledge to explain methods and processes in a variety of ways, each suited to individual student needs, is a particularly strong feature. Assessments are good and students are made aware of what they have achieved and how to improve. They learn well, are highly motivated and work hard. They show high quality research skills and the ability to think for themselves. Research skills were particularly well demonstrated when planning the position of observation posts in relation to a base camp in the Arctic for a piece of course work, where a variety of factors including aeroplane velocity and wind speed was considered. Students work well individually, in pairs and small groups and were able to make contributions in whole class discussions.

Leadership and management

93. The head of faculty has only been in post since the beginning of September, but is already making a positive impact. Faculty management structures are in place and responsibilities are clearly defined and conscientiously carried out. The mathematics faculty works very well together as a team, with teachers supporting each other very effectively. The faculty lacks suitable published materials to support the new modular courses at A-level and A/S level. Staff are aware of this however and work hard to produce their own materials to overcome this concern.

Biology

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

Strengths

- A-level and A/S level results are in line with or above the national average pass rate and many students do well compared with their attainment at GCSE level.
- Teaching is good overall, some is excellent, with good planning, brisk pace and a variety of imaginative activities that help students to understand the subject.
- The use of student performance data to set targets for students challenges and motivates them.
- The students' 'support pack' helps them to keep track of their progress and to plan improvement strategies.

Areas for improvement

- The ambience of some laboratories
- Recruitment of more male students

Standards and achievement

94. Between 1998 and 2000 results at A-level were in line with or significantly better than the national average. The pass rates for A-level and the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level results in 2001 were at and above the provisional national averages respectively. There has been a decline in the percentage of higher grades (ABC) with decline in the average points score of students studying the subject since the previous inspection. Male students do better than female students but far fewer male students are attracted to study biology, diminishing the range of views and attainment that students bring to the subject. Large numbers of A-level students are regularly recruited reflecting the popularity of biology. Analysis of improvement (value added analysis) against students' earlier GCSE results is now being carried out. Of the current Year 13, 19 out of 44 showed better performance at A/S level than their GCSE level results predicted. In the year 2000 biology students did slightly less well than students in other subjects in the school although better than in chemistry, but not as good as physics. The reasons for this have not been analysed.
95. The standard of attainment of current students at this early stage in their courses is at least average and often better. In Year 12 they have, for example, good knowledge of the ultra-structure of the cell and of models of the biochemical make-up of organelles such as the plasma membrane. In Year 13 they can, for example, confidently match terminology involved in genetic crosses with definitions of the terms and their knowledge of monohybrid crosses is sound.

Quality of education

96. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Of the four lessons seen, two were sound and achieved their objectives, one was very good and another was excellent. The better lessons were characterised by greater student involvement in their own learning, by the structure and variety of the lessons and the element of challenge. A very well planned Year 12 lesson on enzymes, for example, effectively built on a brainstorm of students' knowledge from the GCSE course and introduced new aspects through a research and presentation exercise in groups using a range of resources, including ICT. The tasks set were well matched to the abilities of the students. Part of the exercise was to ensure that the whole class had copies of appropriate information to reinforce the presentations. An excellent Year 12 lesson on the biochemistry of the cell membrane involved students using coloured plasticene and toothpicks to create models representing the molecules making up the plasma membrane. This enhanced their understanding of the structure and properties of the membrane based on a better understanding of its component parts. Students' progress on the learning objectives of the lesson was checked by self-assessment questions. The enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge of the teacher combined with stimulating, well illustrated explanations and skilful questioning techniques enabled students to make very good progress. Teachers generally communicate their enthusiasm for the subject and this helps students' motivation and interest. End of lesson reviews usually involve the

teacher summarising rather than taking an opportunity to consolidate the lesson objectives by checking students' understanding and progress.

97. Students are conscientious, well motivated and concentrate in class. They co-operate well during group work and can work independently too. The variety of ways of learning provided helps students to make good progress. They respond well to the obvious interest that teachers show in them and the subject that they are teaching. Students' written work is in the form of notes, assignments and practical work that are conscientiously marked by the teachers, often with constructive comments. Files are well organised. Students are briefed on study techniques, which include devising presentations that involve use of a variety of resources including ICT, which enhance the key skill of communication. They are confident in their use of books and ICT.

Leadership and management

98. Management of the subject is sound with some good features. Teachers have a shared enthusiasm for the subject. The schemes of work are supportive for teachers, and give lesson-by-lesson guidance. A very good feature is the inclusion of references to websites and CD-ROMs. These support learning effectively by providing up-to-date information about biology and simulations, which help students to visualise subject matter or experiments that they would not otherwise have access to, for example the structure of protein molecules in a Year 12 lesson on enzymes, or genetic crosses in fruit flies in a series of Year 13 lessons on genetics. Observation of teaching by the head of subject is at present underused as a way of improving practice as part of performance management. Monitoring strategies are largely informal, but do involve detailed checking of students' results.
99. Staff and students' awareness of how performance at GCSE influences potential performance at A-level and A/S level is very good. Year 12 students understand that the average points score at GCSE is a better predictor than the GCSE grade in the subject only; and they find the consequent targets set for them both challenging and reassuring. The target minimum grade (TMG) is a device that motivates students effectively. Year 13 students' targets are set using information from internal and external module tests. These are revised in the light of performance and motivate students effectively too. Internal assessment of modules of work is used to identify students' areas of weakness and the excellent 'student support pack' helps them to keep track of their progress against targets, to diagnose their difficulties and plan how to tackle them. Guidance to support students is very good and involves steering them to a range of resources that meet their particular needs. Students are well briefed on the requirements for higher education.

Other factors

100. Accommodation sometimes limits the variety of teaching techniques possible. The new laboratories with adjacent ICT facilities contrast sharply with the older laboratories. These are outdated and show obvious signs of wear and tear, such as torn blinds hanging at windows. Very old textbooks fill dusty shelves and gruesome displays of specimens do not present an appropriate image of biology in the 21st Century or engender respect for living things. This, combined with faded displays of students' work, creates a poor ambience for learning about the subject in these rooms.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- The positive relationship between students and students and between students and staff.
- Teaching is good overall, with good planning and precise instruction leaving students in no doubt about objectives.
- Assessment of students' work identifies achievement, allowing effective feedback.
- The department tracking system provides information on students' current progress based on their prior attainment.
- The accommodation and resources of the department are good.
- There is good technical back up for the teaching staff.

Areas for improvement

- No immediately obvious areas for improvement.

Standard of achievement

101. A level results since the last inspection have been in line with the national average. However, in 2001 the pass rate for A-level, together with the percentage of higher grades (AB) and (ABC) were below the provisional national average. The average points score for students studying chemistry in 1998 and 1999 were above, and in 2000, in line with the national average. Results in the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level 2001, were in line with the provisional national average, with the percentage of higher grades (AB) being above the national average. Results since the last inspection show that male students do better than female students in achieving the higher grades (ABC), although in 2000 female students achieved higher grades .
102. The standard of work seen was above average. In Year 12, students demonstrated their practical skills in planning, recording and analysing, a series of reactions between different ions. Students worked quietly and efficiently in small groups to identify successfully the products of these reactions and summarise these reactions using simple ionic equations. In Year 13, following an introduction to acids and bases, students developed their knowledge well in terms of proton donors and acceptors. An effective end of lesson review showed that students had made good progress in developing their understanding of this topic.

Quality of education

103. Teaching is good and there is a pleasant co-operative climate between staff and students within the department. Lessons were well structured, the lesson plans were detailed and followed through to ensure objectives were met. Teachers actively encouraged their students to take responsibility for their own learning by requiring them to look up formulae, work out equations and draw inferences. In a Year 13 lesson on the mass spectrometer students were expected to predict the fragments which molecules would be broken into and to suggest how they would be identified using this analytical technique. All teachers demonstrated their ability to involve the whole class in the central theme of the lesson. They did this by skilful questioning throughout the lesson and recording the key points on the white board. The tasks set were appropriate to the

ability of the students and a variety of strategies were used throughout lessons that were challenging and led to increased knowledge and understanding. Students' work was well presented and demonstrated high levels of organisational skills. They were keen to talk about their work and were familiar with the standard to which they were working. Their assignments and course work were constructively marked and helped students to identify both their strengths and areas for development.

Leadership and management

104. The leadership of the department is good. The administration of both Years 12 and 13 is good. The organisation of schemes of work, support for teachers from the technical staff, the resources and accommodation are all of a high standard. A pleasant working relationship exists within the department. The tracking system ensures that students are well aware of their progress. The system of target minimum grade is operated well and allows them to judge the type of progress they are making. Students' achievements overall are good.
105. Since the last inspection the department has maintained its high standard. There is a supportive ethos which is clearly reflected within the chemistry laboratories by students' co-operative behaviour and in their pleasant day to day relationships with each other and with their teachers. This was highlighted by a Year 12 student who had recently joined the school and found both staff and students supportive and friendly.

Physics

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

Strengths

- A-level results are well above average.
- The standards of work seen are above national averages.
- Teaching is good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Leadership and planning are good.
- Relationships are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities to enhance the curriculum with visits and visiting speakers.

Standards and achievement

106. The GCE A-level results for the years 1998 to 2000 were well above the national average when judged on students' average points scores. Pass rates for grades A-C were also above the national average. Unconfirmed results for the year 2001 show the overall pass rate likely to be lower than previously but still above the national average, (validated national statistics are not yet available for comparison). The percentage of grades A-C is likely to be lower than the national average. The number of girls studying physics during the last few years has been low. Their results have been varied but a few have obtained the highest grades.

107. The standards of work seen are high. In Year 13 most students are making good progress and working at levels in line with their previous attainment or higher. In class they apply their previous knowledge well to new situations. For example, starting with the equation for gravitational attraction with which they were familiar they constructed the likely form of an equation linking the force between charges and understood what was meant by, 'inverse square law'. Using their equation they calculated the force on a charged particle and related this to Rutherford scattering. They showed good recall of previous work and a good knowledge of scientific units and terminology.
108. Students in Year 12 have studied physics for only a few weeks but demonstrate a good grasp of the essentials of particle physics. They know about hadrons and baryons, how bubble chamber photographs are analysed and understand the importance of the conservation of quantities such as charge in decay processes. In practical work they are less adept and exhibit skills little better than those expected at GCSE level. Ray diagrams in optical experiments were sometimes done carelessly and the choice of which angles to measure presented some difficulties. Most students are able to use equations successfully to calculate a result

Quality of teaching

109. Teaching is good overall. Where lessons were well planned and brisk, students maintained interest and made valuable contributions. When set intellectually challenging problems they were able to reason clearly and follow a logical argument to its conclusion. On a few occasions the use of questions aimed at a whole group failed to involve all students fully and the rate of progress was slower. Teachers show expert knowledge of their subjects and cope easily with unexpected questions, on occasions using them to stimulate further discussion and extend students' knowledge and ability to reason.
110. Students learn well. They are well motivated and behave courteously to teachers and classmates. When working individually they apply themselves assiduously and co-operate well in groups, working quietly and conscientiously. They are happy to undertake extra work in areas where they feel they have weaknesses and approach staff willingly for further advice. Students' notes are generally neat, diagrams drawn with care and tables of results carefully constructed. A number graphs are drawn to a very high standard. At times students appear reticent to answer questions and questions directed to a whole class elicit a limited response. However, those questioned directly usually know the answer, can elaborate further if required and are capable of expressing their ideas on the board to the whole group when requested.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management within the department are good. Subject areas to be taught by each teacher within the modular scheme are clearly organised. Students' previous performance is well tabulated and used to predict future capabilities. Examination dates and deadlines are clearly displayed around the department for students' information.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in design and technology. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of faculty and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in the sixth form is **very good with outstanding features**.

Strengths

- Results are excellent with a very high number of students gaining A-C grades.
- Outstanding leadership and management.
- Very good teaching.
- Clear vision for the subject.
- Teaching and learning are carefully monitored and analysed. The results are used effectively to inform development planning.

Areas for improvement

- Clearer conclusion to the end of some lessons with time to review progress and revisit learning objectives.
- Further development of the curriculum, in areas the subject has already identified, specifically computer aided design and manufacture.

Standards and achievement

112. Overall standards in design and technology are very high. The percentage of students gaining A-C grades at A-level is very high, 70% this year compared with 56% nationally. Standards in design and technology continue to rise compared with students' results in other subjects. Outstanding results were achieved by students taking A/S examinations in 2001, the first time it was offered. Seventy per cent of students achieved A grades in their case study.
113. These very high standards were also evident in the work of current students. Students were seen carrying out rigorous analysis of hand-held games leading to the developing of their own ideas. All students displayed wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of consumer products and design influences. Their ideas demonstrate clear consideration of the end user and flair for innovative thinking. All students were able to produce high quality illustrations of their ideas with some students showing well developed skills using recently introduced computer aided design software.
114. The work of students shows rapid development of knowledge and understanding of materials, processes and design styles. There is clear evidence of growing confidence when balancing conflicting constraints to produce well thought out products. Year 13 storage projects, influenced by styling from the Bauhaus design school, were developed for the demands of modern consumer living.

115. Students show considerable maturity in the way they tackle extended projects applying themselves consistently over lengthy periods. Teachers and students work corporately to develop products where all ideas and suggestions are valued. The excellent behaviour of students makes a significant contribution to the extremely positive design culture that exists.

Quality of education

116. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are carefully planned to allow many to be conducted as a professional dialogue, with students and teachers adopting equal roles within a team activity. Students demonstrate great maturity and a willingness to promote their ideas with powerful arguments whilst valuing the views of others. Parents are kept fully informed of work in progress, particularly during the major design projects that form a significant element of sixth form courses.
117. The curriculum is broad, covering all aspects of the examination requirements and allows students the flexibility to engage in projects that interest them. Teachers' specialist knowledge covers many areas of expertise. For example, Year 13 students were seen benefiting from detailed technical guidance on construction techniques for a wide range of materials when carrying out detailed design work on storage systems.
118. Considerable effort goes into maintaining a stimulating environment with excellent displays of students' work and that of professional designers. Resources are very well managed with everyone respecting equipment and no sign of materials being wasted. Carefully planned links are in place with business, and a recent project with the IncPen Packaging Trust received a commendation. These links build on similar work lower down the school.

Leadership and management

119. Design and technology greatly benefits from outstanding leadership and management and the support of senior management. There is a clear vision for the subject and the subject leader pursues this with single-minded determination. He promotes a very positive ethos amongst teachers and students and works tirelessly for the benefit of the subject. The work of support staff is well managed and their work has a very positive impact on work in the department.
120. Teaching and learning are closely monitored by school managers, the subject leader and teachers. The results are carefully analysed to support thorough development planning. Minor shortcomings in the areas of systems and control and of computer aided manufacture have already been identified. Strategies of staff development and resourcing have been put in place to address them.
121. There is a clear view how design and technology should develop including a bid to become a Technology College. This is a key part of a carefully planned strategy to further strengthen the excellent provision that already exists.

BUSINESS

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A level in business studies. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of faculty and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Business education

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management
- Teaching, especially the support given to weaker students and for key skills development
- Procedures for monitoring students' performance
- Positive attitudes of students

Areas for improvement

- The introduction of a wider range of appropriate teaching strategies to provide for differentiation and the promotion of independent learning

Standards and achievement

122. Although attainment of A-level business studies has been declining since 1998, it has always been either above or in line with national averages. Although unconfirmed attainment for A-level in 2001 shows a drop to below national average, results in the new advanced subsidiary(A/S) level show an increase in attainment and are well above national averages. Business studies is a popular course, although boys significantly outnumber girls. The number of students is growing annually with a resultant wider range of ability than in 1998, and this may lead to a decline in the number of grades A and B, however grades A to E remain above the national averages. Current students' work in both lessons and work files shows that standards are as expected for A-level, although the work of some Year 12 students, at this early stage in the course, is more descriptive than analytical.
123. Students are starting to develop wider experiences of the business world and many use their own experience from part-time employment to support their work in lessons, but some students feel there is a lack of industrial contact. In Year 12, students are beginning to develop a clear understanding of the theory of elasticity of demand through a range of practical activities, and the mathematicians within the group confidently make the calculations to support learning. In Year 13, students of all levels of ability successfully analyse national advertisements and, through group work, collaborate and strengthen their ideas on appropriate target markets. Where students rely on their teacher for the provision of notes, it is at the expense of an opportunity to develop as independent learners. All students use appropriate levels of business terminology in their written and oral work, and most students use a computer to present written homework with a high standard of report writing. Students' written and oral work benefits from planned key skills activities for communication, information

technology, and working with others in planned group activities, but confidence is developing more slowly with the application of number. There are positive attitudes and behaviour is excellent.

Quality of education

124. All teachers have a strong knowledge of business, and include relevant local and up-to-date topics to stimulate interest. There are clear learning objectives in all lessons, but the students' learning is not always reinforced in the plenary session. Teachers provide a variety of activities throughout lessons and this maintains a good pace. There are high standards of intervention by teachers who support weaker students when they are developing knowledge and understanding through group work, but there is a lack of structured activities to provide special challenge for the most able. Homework is effective in reinforcing class work, it consolidates learning and offers wider opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. Marking is very good, there is positive guidance for improvement and when combined with exemplar material this has a beneficial effect on attainment.

Leadership and management

125. Management is good, there is a clear vision for the department, and there are well established relationships amongst the staff. Monitoring of teaching is well organised and effective, lessons are observed and reviewed, training needs are addressed and there are targets agreed with staff for future success. Schemes of work clearly state the theoretical aspects to be covered and this is particularly valuable in identifying the division of labour when two or more teachers share a teaching group, but schemes are not sufficiently detailed. They lack the provision of a range of different teaching methods, and as a result, less experienced teachers do not receive the guidance they need to help them to improve their teaching to the whole ability range and support independent learning. However, the department is taking steps to tackle this weakness and so raise standards further. There are good procedures for monitoring students' progress against set targets, and these are constantly reviewed at each assessment stage throughout the sixth form. The department is also introducing a range of open-ended materials to support those who are more able, and students now have an opportunity to carry out a business thematic enquiry instead of coursework in order to improve their potential grades.
126. Access to information and communication technology is good and students make very good use of computers for presentation and research purposes. There are several very good extra curricular opportunities to motivate students and enhance their learning. The school reached the national finals in a national investment competition in 2000, students are encouraged to make an in-depth analysis of a local company for the British Institute of Management sixth form challenge, and the Young Enterprise group is supported by staff from the Pirelli company.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in IT. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the

inspection two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of faculty and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Information technology

Overall, the quality of provision in the sixth form is **good**.

Strengths

- Results are very good with most students exceeding their minimum target grades.
- Standards achieved by students are good when compared with their achievements at GCSE.
- The subject knowledge of teachers is excellent.
- Learning materials are of a very high standard.
- Resources are used efficiently and equipment is very well maintained.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons objectives need to be made clearer at the start and returned to at the end to summarise learning and prepare for further work.
- Development of the school intranet to support learning and communication with parents.
- Analysis of examination results to identify trends for groups and link this to development planning for the curriculum.

Standards and achievement

127. Overall standards of attainment in information technology courses in the sixth form are very high.
128. At A-level all students in recent years have achieved a pass with a very high proportion gaining A-C grades. Seventy per cent in 2001 compared with 45% nationally. The number getting A and B grades is also above the national figure, 26% against 23% nationally. Students' results in ICT are, on average, well above those for the other subjects they take. The number of students taking the subject has increased steadily for a number of years. The results of A/S examinations taken for the first time in 2001 are equally good with 55% of students achieving A or B grades.
129. These high standards are reflected in the work of current students. Male and female students make very good progress in the sixth form with most exceeding their predicted grades. They are conscientious in the way they tackle extended tasks, creating complex systems using the knowledge and skills they have been taught. Project work was at an early stage due to the timing of the inspection. However, students were seen analysing past projects suggesting ways the user interface could be improved and where added features would be beneficial. One student enquired whether a database being demonstrated to track work placements has been adopted. The teacher was very sensitive in his response stating that file compatibility and confidentiality are reasons why the school was not using the database. A more direct response may have caused the student to rule out similar applications as having no likelihood of being adopted.

Quality of education

130. Overall the quality of teaching is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and their planning thorough. Teachers have written course booklets to bridge the gap between introductory and advanced textbooks and these are of extremely high quality. Students are introduced to techniques in a progressive way, building gradually to end with advanced features such as lookup tables and visual basic programming techniques. Students were seen working through these at their own pace without the need for significant teacher input. As a result, teachers were very effectively monitoring students, offering support for those who most needed it.
131. When engaged in project work in private study or at home, students can access support from teachers via e-mail. Students commented that a reply is normally received within 24 hours of the initial message being sent, even at weekends! Many commercial helpdesks would envy such a response time.
132. Teachers show considerable skill in targeting support at a level appropriate to each individual, supporting those who may be struggling whilst challenging the most able to tackle advanced techniques that will gain them high marks. However, there is inconsistency in the way guidance is recorded with some important comments being lost. A consistent approach is needed to record both guidance and the actions students take as a result. This will not only provide a record of how projects develop but also a valuable reference for revision. Good practice seen elsewhere in the faculty could form the basis of developing an appropriate system for A-level ICT.
133. In a small number of lessons learning objectives were not made clear at the beginning and time was not left at the end to return to them, so restricting the progress of some students. Other students left the lesson unclear of the focus for private study prior to the next lesson.
134. An appropriate range of activities has been developed covering the examination requirements for all levels of ability. Extensive support is provided for students working at a basic level complemented by challenging materials for the most able. Significant effort is put into helping students identify real and relevant situations for their projects, a considerable task with over sixty needed each year. Opportunities for students to experience commercial ICT systems are currently restricted and more could be done to develop visits or use of external speakers.
135. Networked computers in dedicated rooms are used for sixth form lessons. Equipment and rooms are well organised with no evidence of unserviceable systems. Students and teachers were able to log on to systems, access software and work without difficulty. Two technicians are used very effectively in supporting the network and ICT systems in school. Resources were used efficiently. Digital projectors greatly enhanced the class demonstrations with all students able to engage fully in these aspects of lessons.
136. Student praised the recently installed computer suite located in the sixth form block. They can now rely on computer access for private study. All students reported adequate access to ICT resources both in school and at home. The school intranet is underdeveloped and has been identified as a future action by the school. Developments

in this area could form a major focus for communication with parents making curriculum materials and homework available on-line.

Leadership and management

137. Leadership of information technology is good with a clear vision for the subject. The curriculum is well planned and teaching is monitored. Records of students' assessments are comprehensive with progress and value-added monitored for all students. Students attain high results and all individuals are monitored very well. However, analysis of results to identify trends and to establish whether all groups are attaining appropriately are underdeveloped. Tackling this would support a sharper focus on teaching and learning in development planning to ensure that current high standards are maintained and improved.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A level in sports/PE studies. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 AS level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of faculty and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved by students in AS/A2 examinations are high.
- Lessons are well-planned and subject knowledge is used effectively to promote learning.
- Relationships between students and staff demonstrate mutual respect and trust.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing range of accredited courses.
- Provision of non-accredited courses.
- Provision of adequate space for use of free weights.

Standards and Achievement

138. Standards achieved by students in advanced subsidiary (A/S) and advanced (A) level GCE examinations are high. A-level results have consistently been above the national average for the past four years. In 2000 they were well above the national average. In 2001 all students taking AS and A-level examinations achieved passes and almost half of them achieved their best grade in sport and physical education.

139. In Year 12 students identify and select relevant information for research and analysis. They understand the principles of weight training, including overload, progression and the distinction between strength and endurance work. In Year 13 higher attaining students demonstrate a clear and refined understanding of the concepts of physical and psychological arousal and its affect on performance. Students analyse and research

factors affecting performance and higher attainers use key IT skills to present extended studies that are detailed, well structured and clearly presented. Course folders are well organised and some marking identifies strengths and action required for improvement.

Quality of Education

140. Teaching is good. In all lessons planning identifies clear learning objectives which are shared with students, ensuring they understand the focus for learning. In the best lessons a brisk pace, broad range of resources and effective use of questioning enables students to develop understanding and link prior knowledge to new areas of study. Teachers apply good (and in some cases very good) subject knowledge to promote learning. Students have well-structured opportunities to search and find internet sites containing information on periodisation and training programmes. Videos and newspaper articles focusing on professional sports action link theory to practice and plenary sessions are used effectively to summarise progress, link prior learning and emphasise the importance of private study for further improvement. Where teaching is less effective, some students require greater guidance on the safe use of weight training and cardiovascular equipment.
141. Students demonstrate excellent attitudes towards learning. They engage readily in lessons and work collaboratively to complete learning tasks. In the best lessons students respond readily to questions, demonstrating confidence and the ability to articulate their views clearly. Relationships between students and staff are characterised by mutual trust and respect. Students are well motivated and enjoy their courses. Year 13 students are proud of their work and feel well supported by their teachers
142. The range of curricular opportunities is limited to A/S and A-level GCE courses. Students have no opportunity to gain awards in sports or fitness leadership even though some of them use private study time to assist in physical education lessons for younger students. The absence of a recreational sports programme for students not taking examination courses in the subject restricts students' participation in physical education and sports activities as well as extracurricular clubs. Indoor accommodation is limited and there is need to ensure adequate space for the use of free weights which are currently stored in the fitness suite.

Leadership and Management

143. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Well-established and clearly understood working procedures provide an effective framework for teaching and learning. The newly implemented system for monitoring students' progress and attainment strengthens the procedures for supporting students. High expectations are balanced by a strong commitment to students. The programme for self-review, monitoring and evaluation of the department contributes to a climate of continual improvement.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer any courses in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design and theatre studies, but music was also sampled. In music results are consistently above the national averages.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in art and design. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered. The numbers taking art and design at this level have increased over the last two years.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A level in theatre studies. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and, talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Art

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

Strengths

- Overall management of the departmental resources and studio organisation
- Relationships between staff and students
- Range and quality of resources available to students
- Good quality of support to students in lessons
- Use of self assessment to ensure that students know their strengths and weaknesses

Areas for improvement

- Skill development, especially in drawing and composition
- Group discussions on contextual and practical issues
- Time-table organisation to enable continuity and progression of working

Standards of achievement

144. Standards overall are average. In 1999, the A-level results of students were in line with national averages at grades A-E, and slightly above at the higher grades of ABC. In 2000 however the results dropped to below national averages, in part due to a weaker cohort of students embarking on the course than in previous years. In 2001, the cohort of students again had low attainment on entry. However, results at grades A-E were again in line with national averages although the higher grades were significantly below the national figures. These students, nevertheless, on average gained better grades in art than in their other subjects. In the 2001 A/S level examinations, results were in line with national averages for all grades.

145. In the lessons observed, standards were in line with national averages. Students in Year 12, for example, were able to discuss a choice of artists which appropriately supported

the development of their work. The use of colour and applied texture in practical work is satisfactory, but drawing and compositional features are relatively weak. Some students have grasped the key aspects of composition and use it well in their work. They are able to undertake investigative work seeking support from teachers when appropriate.

146. Most Year 13 students use observational drawing quite well and they show satisfactory skills in their larger pieces of work. Students in Year 13 are developing a composition from a range of observational starting points, including digital photography. The preparatory studies made to date, however, show limited drawing skills but effective use of colour. References to artists whose work may inform their development is cursory and lacks an understanding of how and what they might gain from a deeper knowledge of such works.
147. Sketchbooks presently do not illustrate students' progression of ideas and skills. Some students are over-reliant upon simply collecting second-hand images rather than developing their own interpretations and experiments.

Quality of education

148. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are well resourced for the practical activities and the students are suitably organised to manage them. Teachers give students ample information in relation to the lesson objectives. Good relations are established between staff and students. Staff work hard to engage students in analysing their work in progress and offer help and guidance. In all lessons seen, staff spent most of their time talking with individual students about their work in a constructive way. At times, opportunities are missed to promote whole class discussion which would further increase students' understanding of their and other artists' work.
149. Assessment procedures are well managed, and knowledge about each student's work is thorough. Students are asked to engage in self-evaluation to target areas for improvement, and as a result they feel informed about the progress they are making. Staff have created stimulating environments for students to work in, with completed works and works underway on the walls and benches, reflecting current practice.
150. Significant weaknesses in the teaching are the failure to adequately develop students' drawing and compositional skills;
- students are not developing the full range of practical skills at an appropriate pace and level;
 - knowledge of and about art and artists is tackled through gallery visits, artist residencies, Internet references and the departmental books. These inform, some aspects of the practical work and stimulate some students. Such references come from a narrow range of historical periods and do not sufficiently encourage students to develop this relevant aspect of study, either for its enrichment possibilities or to inform their practical work.

Leadership and management

151. The department is well led. Studios are well-managed and organised for the benefit of teaching and learning, and are provided with a good range of resources for practical work. Teachers work well together to plan the sixth form curriculum and to monitor the work of the students. Staff arrange a variety of field trips and exhibitions which broaden students' understanding of art as an integral part of our society, as well as informing their own working practices.
152. The departmental handbook serves as a reference for all staff and highlights principles and policies to be followed within the agreed units of work. However, the planned programmes of study are topic based and skill development is not sufficiently stressed.
153. Progress, continuity and the pace of working are hindered by the separate one-hour sessions, where too much time is spent preparing and clearing-away materials. In one instance, where Year 13 are time-tabled for two consecutive lessons, they have to move to a different studio losing the advantage of the double lesson.

Theatre studies

Overall, the provision in theatre studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards have improved markedly and students achieve very well in comparison with their performance in other subjects.
- Teaching is very good; teachers use a variety of strategies very effectively.
- The social development of students is a major strength.
- Extra-curricular activities enhance and broaden students' knowledge of the subject.
- There is very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Poor sound proofing leads to noise from the music rooms becoming intrusive.
- There is scope for an extra degree of challenge for the most able.

Standards and achievement

154. Students' results in theatre studies at A/S level are slightly below national averages in both overall pass rates and for the higher grades. Students performed well against their prior attainment, however, and their results in theatre studies were better than their average results in other subjects. At A-level there had been a drop in results in 2000 attributable to staff absence. Although results in 2001 were still below national averages there was a very marked improvement in students gaining A-C grades. The results gained by students in theatre studies were considerably better than their average in other subjects. The number of boys taking the subject is too small for valid statistical comparisons of the results gained by boys and girls.
155. Students on both courses demonstrate good levels of creativity and originality in their presentations and performance. There is a good level of understanding of dramatic objectives. Students are well able to make relevant references to wider reading and

professional productions they have seen. By Year 13 they show clear understanding of the complex relationship between authors, actors and audience. One student articulated the view that: “a script comes to life and assumes meaning for an audience when the actor analyses and brings out the sense which the author intended to give it”. They are also able to use and develop appropriate dramatic techniques and conventions in presentations so that in a lesson looking at montage, for example, students carefully juxtaposed stillness and movement, noise and silence, space and crowd in quick succession for maximum effect. In their written assignments, higher attaining students justify critical comments on subject matter, dramatic intention and interpretation in productions by close references to both performances and dramatic theory.

Quality of education

156. The overall quality of teaching is very good. All lessons commence with very clear statements of objectives and very good preliminary questioning to ascertain students’ levels of understanding from previous lessons. Lessons are very well structured with regular references to the key issues. Praise is used effectively so all students feel secure and able to participate fully. There is an appropriate balance of group work and planning, presentation and analysis. Occasionally there is a lack of precise guidance on time limits for tasks within a lesson. Teachers are very supportive of lower attaining students and effectively intervene when such students encounter difficulties. Opportunities to challenge the higher attaining students are not always taken. Teachers’ subject knowledge and knowledge of students’ strengths and weaknesses are excellent. Relationships within lessons are also excellent.
157. As a result of the above, learning on both A/S and A-level courses, is very good. A comparison of Year 12 and Year 13 students demonstrates how over the course of a year, the use of specialist vocabulary has become common place and students have assimilated concepts such as ‘Brechtian’ or ‘according to the beliefs of Stanilavski’. The students themselves recognise how they develop strategies in practical co-operation and collaborative planning. In effect, the learning that takes place in theatre studies has a major impact on students’ social development as well as on practical and theoretical knowledge of drama. The students demonstrate a growing capacity for independent thought and confidence in their own capabilities.

Leadership and management

158. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Although most teachers are relatively inexperienced, there is a genuinely corporate approach to the teaching of the subject; and the very good morale and enthusiasm evident in the department is a reflection of the successful leadership. Support materials that are produced by the department are very beneficial. The excellent and appropriate range of extracurricular activities in the form of productions, theatre visits and presentations by ex-students all help to give the subject and department a positive identity. Very good use is made of the new accommodation, which is of a high quality but the issue of inadequate sound proofing needs to be addressed.
159. The many positive qualities outlined above are frequently recognised and referred to by the students themselves.

HUMANITIES

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in geography. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in history. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered. The numbers taking history at this level have increased dramatically over the last two years.

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in psychology. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards at A-level are above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good; teachers use questioning effectively and good use is made of a broad range of resources to support learning.
- The standard of students' coursework and investigations is high; guidance given to students to support this work is very good.
- Teacher-student relationships are very good; teachers have high expectations.
- The subject is well led and there is good monitoring of the progress of students.

Areas for development

- Further promote 'student talk' to aid and consolidate learning.
- Improve the availability of ICT within the classroom.
- Promote further the good practice stemming from the monitoring of lessons.

Standards and achievement

160. Standards are better than at the time of the last inspection. Although there have been variations in the percentage of ABC and AB grades achieved over the last four years the grades achieved remain above national averages in all areas. The overall percentage pass rate achieved by students has remained at 100% since 1997. All students who took the GCE A-level examination gained a pass grade with 52%

achieving the highest grades, A and B. The A/S level examination results are high with 92% achieving C grades or better. Students from all ability ranges achieve their potential with the most capable students doing well. Overall male students performed better than female.

161. In Year 13 students are able to discuss confidently and speak knowledgeably about geographical concepts and issues such as the impact of climate on human geography and behaviour. Their knowledge and understanding are good and they use technical language appropriately. They are able to effectively interpret information and can draw geographical conclusions from evidence presented to them. They have a clear understanding of hypothesis testing and can effectively draw geographical conclusions from a broad range of data and resources. They make good use of information and communication technology especially in coursework modules and fieldwork assignments. Some students are less confident in their understanding of climate especially the linking of global locations with characteristic climatic patterns.
162. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their A/S course. They show a good knowledge of fieldwork techniques and the requirements of hypothesis testing. They are less confident in linking cause with consequence, such as the impact of global warming on localised flooding. Students actively participate in class activities, are able to work independently when required and respond positively to teacher questioning. Students demonstrate a sound understanding of factors influencing the development of cities in less economically developed areas. They use past learning effectively to describe reason for migration. Students are achieving much as expected in relation to their previous GCSE performance.

Quality of education.

163. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers' high expectations are evident, which encourages students to achieve. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and also have a good knowledge of the students they teach. Monitoring of students' learning is good and effective support is given to slower learners. Work is regularly marked and supported by oral feedback. Students are given a clear and accurate assessment of what they have to do to improve. Lessons are well planned and supported by a broad range of appropriate resources of good quality. Students are actively encouraged to use information and communication technology to support their learning. The development of basic skills, especially developing critical thinking, analysis and taking responsibility for their own learning, are successfully supported through the learning strategies used. Well-structured teacher-student discussion within lessons has a positive impact in promoting students' thinking as was evident in a Year 12 lesson. Here students were actively developing appropriate hypotheses and data collection strategies needed to complete an assessed geographical investigation. Good use is made of questioning that challenges students, encourages higher order concept development and stimulates geographical thinking. Opportunities that promote and encourage "student talk" to support learning are being missed. In some lessons, the teacher's input is high and students are not being given the opportunity to develop their own ideas or consolidate understanding of key geographical concepts through talk.

164. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond positively to the demands being made by the differing learning styles and strategies they encounter. Most Year 13 students display high levels of confidence and can talk authoritatively on aspects of the course so far covered. Year 13 students are especially knowledgeable in respect of fieldwork and the geographical thinking that underpins the geographical investigations they have carried out. Students use resources well, being able to extract and analyse appropriate information, and to both question and formulate appropriate geographical responses. There is clearly a development in geographical maturity between the first and second years of the A/S level and A-level course, especially in terms of students' confidence, and the ability to express geographical thinking and concepts orally. Students work well together, being willing to listen to the views of their peers and engage in productive group work when asked. Available teacher help and resources generated by the department effectively support students in completing individual assessments and examined course modules. Most approach this work with confidence.

Leadership and management

165. The department is well managed. The establishment of teaching materials to support new A/S level and A-level courses has been effectively introduced. The setting of appropriate targets for students and the monitoring of students' progress are well developed and taken seriously. Strategies employed for analysing results and assessing units of work are good, and both teachers and students have a clear understanding of expected outcomes and progress being achieved. Outcomes from monitoring, especially the sharing of good practice centred on students' learning, is not being fully utilised within the department to further improve the overall quality teaching and learning. A broad range of helpful guidance materials is available to students to support them in completing coursework and individual geographical assignments. Classroom based ICT resourcing is, however, unsatisfactory.

History

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

Strengths

- The overall maintenance of high standards of work at A-level.
- Students show good knowledge and understanding. Year 13 students are able to use a range of investigative skills to produce high quality written assignments.
- Teaching is good; lessons use a range of activities, which are effective in helping students to improve their performance.
- Good support and guidance given to students to help them identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- The subject is well led.

Areas for improvement

- Students' skills in more extended whole class discussion are not as well developed as other aspects of their work.
- More careful organisation of student files to ensure ease of revision and further use of key questions to guide note taking.

Standards and achievements

166. The most recent GCE A-level examination results for 2001 as well as A/S level were below average. This, however, is untypical of the department's usual results, which have been consistently above national averages for the past few years both in terms of overall pass rate and in the number of students reaching the higher grades of A/B. Students usually do well in history compared with their performance in other subjects. Poor results in 2001 are in part due to a much larger cohort of students with larger numbers of low attaining students, partly through changes in syllabus and in part due to changes in staffing. The overall trend has been upwards since the last inspection in line with trends nationally. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders confirms this. Male and female students do equally well.
167. The overall quality of students' oral and written work is above the national average both in A/S and A-level work. Students display a good knowledge and understanding of the periods they are studying. They are able to produce carefully organised and well-written arguments supported by good use of evidence. For example, students in Year 13 produced powerful essays on Robespierre's role in the French revolution recognising both his contribution as defender of the under-privileged and the impact of the terror, which did so much to discredit the revolutionary government. Individual research into Napoleon indicated that students have a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis.
168. Students in Year 13 show confidence in expressing their views and are less dependent on their teachers for sources of information. They make good use of ICT both as a means of producing high quality written assignments as well as in investigating the Internet for different sources of information. The more able particularly show good judgement in questioning the reliability and value of particular material as well as being able to identify the complexities of historical change. For example, a Year 13 student in reflecting on the foreign policy of the 'July Monarchy' in France (1815-30) commented "in many ways the King's hands were tied - he was in a lose/lose situation - the quadruple alliance on one side and French public opinion on the other".

The quality of education

169. Students make good progress in history. This is due to the good quality of teaching. Lessons have a clear structure and are well planned to provide a rich variety of learning activities and resource material. Teachers have very good knowledge and love of their subject and this is communicated to their students. As a consequence teachers have very good relationships with students. They are approachable but demand high standards of work. The rapport between teachers and students is extremely positive and underlines the very committed attitude of students to their work. Several students commented that the teachers had successfully raised their expectations of what they could achieve. The effective use of feedback to students both in written comments when marking work and in oral discussion enables students to identify both their strengths and weaknesses in history. At times, however, it is not always clear to students how attainment in lessons relates to A-level grades.
170. Students key skills of communication and ICT are carefully developed through a range of strategies. Teachers provide structured study guides to modules, particularly in Year

12. They also give appropriate writing frames to help students to structure and develop essay-writing skills. Lessons have a clear purpose and new ideas are carefully explained to check that students both understand and are able to apply these ideas in a different context. Investigative and enquiry skills are enhanced through guided use of ICT. Much use is made of paired work but opportunities for more extended contribution in discussions involving the whole class could be introduced. Teachers frequently encourage students to compare different periods of history, for example, in a Year 13 class looking at the importance of foreign policy in shaping public opinion during the 'July Monarchy' in France. Teachers made comparison to the impact of the recent terrorist attack in America and of the Falklands War in Britain. Students learn well and most can talk authoritatively on the aspects of the course they have studied. There is a clear development of historical skills, particularly in written work between the first and second years of the A-level course. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning opportunities that they experience. Work is generally well organised in folders although in some cases more guidance through structured use of questions would help students produce more focused notes. This would make revision easier. Time is used well in lessons and students are confident in asking for guidance and help as appropriate. They are reflective on issues and questions put to them. In a response to a question "why didn't Britain have a revolution in 1789?" one student gave a considered response relating to the political and economic differences between France and Britain.

Leadership and management

171. The department is well led and there are good relationships with the senior management team both in terms of monitoring practice and providing support. There is a strong sense of team spirit amongst the staff and a real commitment both to the subject and the students. Good use is made of assessment data to inform and evaluate practice. For example, the recent dip in results in 2001 has led to a review of the procedures by which targets are set both for the cohort and individual students. Work is carefully planned to ensure that best practice is shared and implemented across the department. The department has not only maintained the high standards identified in the last inspection report but also made good progress in monitoring and disseminating good practice

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have high expectations of standards of work.
- A variety of teaching and learning methods is used well.
- The commitment of teachers is high.
- Teachers know the subject well.
- Lessons have clear aims and learning outcomes.
- Good use is made of time and resources, especially ICT.
- Assessment practice is effective.
- There is an effective self-review system for students.

Areas for improvement

- The development of independent enquiry skills.
- Improving use of technical language across written work.
- A/S level results.

Standards and achievement

172. The GCE A/S level and A-level examination results in 2001 were above national averages and continue to show an overall improvement each year. All students gained an award and a significant number gained the highest grades, A and B. Female students outperformed male students. However, many more girls take psychology than boys. All completed the course. In relation to their earlier GCSE results they performed as predicted or better.
173. The standards achieved by students are a good reflection of very good teaching and learning. Most of the students achieve high standards and the school adds value as students move from Year 12 to 13. Thus, a significant majority actually achieve better standards than would be typically expected on the basis of their earlier school work. Students were observed to develop their vocabulary, thinking and reasoning skills. They work well together and generally have a clear understanding of their own learning and performance. Standards in ICT basic skills are good but writing and reading skills are only satisfactory in terms of spelling and the pronunciation of technical words. Research skills require more continuity and consistency for a minority of students. While most students are committed independent workers, a few show an over-reliance on their teacher.
174. The standards of work in Year 13 are high. In lessons seen students were developing their thinking skills through discussion and problem solving, using ICT as a key skill to help them improve their own learning and performance. A very good Year 13 class discussed obsessive compulsive disorders and examined the various kinds of obsessions identified by clinicians. The weakest skill is writing and reading. Most students could express themselves more fully by using correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. To do this students need to speak and write clearly and concisely and use appropriate and subject specific terminology. Students having difficulty seek help from their teacher.
175. Students in Year 12 are comparatively new to their course. Standards are average for this stage of the course. Students are developing the use of appropriate terms of reference to enable them to communicate their understanding of psychology. Teachers were observed teaching the various research methods employed by psychologists. A Year 12 group discovered that ethics describe what should happen in an ideal world. Students understood the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods used - for example, the artificiality of laboratory experiments and the ethical issues involved in this type of research.

Quality of teaching

176. Teaching is very good. In lessons seen, teachers understood how to teach psychology to students new to the subject. The methods used to explore the importance and complexity of human memory and to undertake practical write-ups were innovative. Teachers have a good understanding of psychology and grasp the importance of using

appropriate vocabulary to help students learn. Work is planned logically and a good range of interesting experiments are organised. Good practical work is undertaken and the standard of outcomes are high. Reports are accurately marked and the application of ICT skills is taught. Teachers show how to link theory and practical work and reveal their understanding of the various areas of psychology. For example, informative teaching on Milgram's study of obedience helped students understand the ethical guidelines required for experiments.

177. Students learn well. Across Years 12 and 13 most students are confident when speaking. They clearly express their own ideas to others and react positively to responses received. Concern for others is evident in classes and realised in good behaviour. Students confidently express opinions and influence others by their reasoned arguments.
178. The written work produced is variable. Most is technically correct in terms of the usage of psychology, its theories and the critical relationship between theory and evidence. Students' ability to write effectively is variable. Most can write coherently and accurately but a minority experience problems in expressing themselves clearly in writing. The best work uses recognised approaches for research reports with introduction, method, results, line graphs, conclusion and evaluation. Students work well in small groups to research, prepare and deliver their presentations. They draw effectively on appropriate questionnaire surveys and interviews, which they have undertaken.
179. Attendance at classes is good. Students realise that missing lessons means they cannot get to grips with a topic. A few students find their incomplete notes unhelpful to completing their coursework. Punctuality is a problem for a few students. Deadlines are met by a majority of students. Most participate in discussion and achieve more by offering ideas. Students find the process of listening to others and being receptive to alternative opinions fulfilling.
180. Teachers competently use a range of teaching techniques. These are effectively developing students' skills to analyse psychology and apply the relevant theories and concepts. The higher achievers are supported with advanced work and are shown how to conduct focused practical work. The teaching of writing skills for all levels of achievement could be improved. Students' written style is underdeveloped. Oral skills are better developed. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

Leadership and management

181. The leadership of psychology is good. As a result, the students are aware of, and are given strategies to meet specific targets and are developing informed opinions. They recognise the importance of research in psychology and are encouraged to provide reasoned argument for their points of view.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCE A-level in English. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These

observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and, talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

English

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

Strengths

- Consistent improvement in results over last three years.
- Very good teaching which enables students to adapt quickly to the increased demands of A-level.
- The monitoring of performance and progress of students is very effective
- Students develop independence in thinking.
- The acting head of department provides very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure pace is always maintained in lessons.

Standards and achievement

182. Results in English literature at A/S level in 2001 were above the national average, considerably so for A, B and C grades. Results gained by students were also higher than their average for other subjects. Results at A-level in 2001 were also above national averages for the higher grades and students performed much better in English literature than the average for their other subjects. Over the last three years there has been a marked and consistent improvement in the percentage of students, both male and female, gaining A-C grades.
183. By Year 13 standards achieved by students are good. They are generally able both to analyse texts with regard to the ways in which authors use both structure and language to shape meaning and to communicate that knowledge and understanding orally and in writing. The higher attaining students use close consideration of texts as a basis for very good discussions on authors' intentions. One group of students developed the theory that Othello's use of the term "honest Iago" was an example of irony, not on Othello's part as he was unaware of Iago's purpose, but in the form of "dramatic irony" because the audience are privy to knowledge the character does not have. Another student during the same discussion suggested that Shakespeare used Iago "as a metaphor for the evil inside us". Students are also skilled in making comparisons between texts in terms of similarity in literary techniques, author's voice, structure and organisation. By Year 13, the majority of students are using appropriate terminology such as allegory, soliloquy and interior dialogue in their discussions as well as their essays.
184. Judgements in essays are usually justified by good use of quotations or textual references and the form and style of the writing are appropriate for the nature of the assignment. The development of the actual structure of essays and the organisation of material improve very noticeably between Year 12 and Year 13.

Quality of education

185. Teaching is very good overall. Lessons are characterised by a very supportive ethos. Lessons generally start with a clear explanation of objectives and are well structured so as to allow regular reinforcement of the key concepts and issues. On occasions where time limits are not given for individual tasks within lessons, there is a slight lack of urgency to the pace. Questioning is used effectively both to provoke further consideration of important aspects but also to allow teachers to ascertain understanding and retention of knowledge. Marking offers constructive guidance on how to improve and address weaknesses. The very good subject knowledge demonstrated by teachers allowed useful exemplification and references to other authors and texts to permeate lessons. Teachers very supportive responses to opinions stated by students frequently engendered further effective discussion. In a lesson where students were analysing Sonnet 130, the students without prompting took over from the teacher in the questioning of another student's interpretation of the text. Much of the teaching actively encourages students to form their own views and show initiative. Students expressed the opinion that the transition from GCSE to A/S level initially appeared difficult. However, in a Year 12 lesson on *Hard Times*, the teachers' careful directing of their critical faculties to Dickens' real purpose as opposed to the purely literal meaning enabled students to undertake a more subtle analysis of the novel. Students work very well together and listen attentively to each other's views.

Leadership and management

186. There is very good leadership and management of the department. New guidance on the monitoring of the progress of students is clearly beneficial. Decisions to change elements of the course are effectively and promptly implemented. A carefully organised revision programme ensures that students are given optimum support. The importance placed upon the sharing of ideas and materials between teachers helps to create a positive and corporate approach. The extracurricular provision, which is good, is much appreciated by students and the department liaises closely with the theatre studies department to further enhance such provision.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The focus was on French but German and Spanish were also sampled. In German and Spanish, results are consistently above the national average although no students took Spanish in the 2001 A-level examinations. Two lessons were observed, both of which were at least good. In one lesson, a brainstorming technique was used to particularly good effect to stimulate ideas, develop vocabulary and extend grammar. Students in Years 12 and 13 work towards GCSE A-level in French, German and Spanish. During the academic year 2000/2001 Year 12 students studied the new Curriculum 2000 A/S level. During the inspection of French two lessons in Year 12 and two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with the scrutiny of students' work, discussion with the head of department and talks with individual students and discussions with groups of Year 12 and 13 students, provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

French

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

Strengths

- A level examination results in 2001 showed a marked improvement in the number of students gaining the higher grades and were above the national average. All students gained the highest possible grade in the A/S examinations.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well-planned and generally delivered with a flair and expertise which enables students to extend their knowledge and develop their understanding.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very positive. Students know that they are always encouraged to do their best and consequently they become very confident learners.
- The faculty is very well led and its newly refurbished suite of rooms sets a quality tone for learning.

Areas for improvement

- The system for setting targets for students is rather informal and not clearly enough focused either in terms of setting learning goals or of recording information.

Standards and achievement

187. The GCE A-level results this year (2001) were above the national average and are indicative of an upward trend. All students passed the examination, more than three quarters of whom were awarded the top grades of A, B or C. At the end of their first year in the sixth form, Year 12 students took the GCE A/S examination and all were awarded the highest possible grade. Most students in both years did at least as well as expected in relation to their earlier GCSE results.
188. The standard of work of the current Year 13 students is indicative of the high level they reached in the A/S examination and is consequently well above average. Their ability to debate in French the pros and cons of the death penalty within the wider context of crime and punishment was most impressive. They rose to the challenge of using new vocabulary and expressions and were able to produce sentences, both orally and in writing, with a very high level of grammatical complexity and accuracy. Their French was fluent and their accents very good.
189. Students in Year 12 are only a few weeks into their course but are already beginning to build on their GCSE work. In one lesson, they came to terms with the formation and use of the conditional tense and were soon able to use it in the wider context of the sequence of tenses. In another, they struggled initially with the concept of adverbial phrases, but had the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge for homework. Their files are well organised and include notes for reference in addition to written work which they have corrected and improved in response to the teachers' guidance.

Quality of education

190. Teaching is good overall, and students consequently learn well. Lessons are generally well planned, have clear objectives and move along at a brisk pace. Activities are varied, and students are challenged at their own level to maximise learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set, most of the lessons also being conducted very proficiently in French. In a Year 13 lesson, students were involved in working as a whole group, independently and collaboratively and using visual as well as oral and written stimuli. The lesson was then drawn together and consolidation and development work set for homework. A real strength of the lessons is the very positive relationship between teachers and students where humour abounds and where students have an almost tangible trust and confidence in their teachers. All the students in the lesson on the development of the conditional tense were able to make progress because of the skilful and humorous use of questioning and prompting by the teacher. Where lessons were less successful, the pace was more pedestrian and there was insufficient pointing of new grammar and vocabulary to ensure comprehension. Learning was consequently not as good.
191. Written work takes the form of quick vocabulary tests and language exercises in addition to pieces of independent writing. Listening practice is always done at home and then followed up at school. Marking is always thorough but students would benefit from more precise and consistent target setting, which is linked to specific examination grades.
192. Students learn well. They are enthusiastic and respond very positively to their lessons. They are eager to develop their skills by learning new vocabulary and grammar, and show determination in acquiring difficult concepts. They enjoy working collaboratively and are happy to share and develop ideas. There is less success when the pace of a lesson is laboured and students are unsure of what the learning task involves.
193. The independent work, which students undertake in the resource centre or at home, is approached with maturity. Their tasks are clearly defined by the teachers and include both consolidation and development work. They use ICT to enhance their learning, for example, using articles from French newspapers downloaded from the Internet on the terrorist attacks in New York. They are competent in the use of dictionaries and reference grammars.
194. Participation in the French Exchange and contact with native speakers in school also enhance student learning.

Leadership and management

195. The good teaching and learning are strongly supported by the very good leadership and management of the faculty. The faculty has a clear sense of direction. Schemes of work are clearly defined within the requirements of the examination board, and staff who share the teaching of French know exactly where their individual responsibilities lie. Comprehensive policies in the lower school, for example on the use of French in lessons, have laid a firm foundation for work in the sixth form. The newly refurbished and well-equipped Modern Languages Suite has a positive impact on learning, setting a high quality tone for every lesson.