

INSPECTION REPORT

TEESDALE SCHOOL

Barnard Castle

LEA area: County Durham

Unique reference number: 114303

Headteacher: Paul Harrison

Reporting inspector: Ted Wheatley

10013

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 189827

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Prospect Place Barnard Castle County Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Russell Tallentire
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	Ted Wheatley	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9974	Daljit Singh	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12118	Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Post 16: Geography.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
23246	John Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Post 16: Biology.	
18989	Bernard Mason	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Post 16: English.	
27416	Tom Howard	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Post 16: Mathematics.	
24127	Jim Kidd	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	
7084	Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology; Post 16: Information and communication technology.	
22906	Barry Hodgson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Post 16: Physical education.	
27082	Geoffrey Henshall	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages; Post 16: French.	
1340	David Wigley	<i>Team inspector</i> <i>Post 16 co-ordinator</i>	Music; Drama.	
30901	Susan Schofield	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art; Post 16: Art.	
27803	Joe Clark	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education; Equal opportunities.	
13623	James Waddington	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology; Post 16: design and technology.	
12641	Pauline Lyseight-Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Teesdale School has 884 pupils and students, 121 of whom are in the Sixth Form. Numbers of boys and girls are approximately equal and there are more students in Year 12 than in Year 13. Numbers are broadly the same as they were at the last inspection. There are very few pupils from families where English is not the first language and these are not in the early stages of English language acquisition. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs or who are on the school's register of special educational needs are both average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds; many come to school by bus from surrounding villages. Attainment on entry is above average, but has changed in recent years due to changes in the school's catchment area. The school is on two sites; an annex where some design and technology is taught is a few minutes walk away. There are some temporary short-term staff appointments in the school because the school has been unable to recruit staff of the calibre it requires. At the time of the inspection, the school was applying for science college status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Management is providing clear direction for the school to improve. Teaching and learning are good and pupils and students make good progress as they move through the school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils and students make good progress as they move through the school.
- Teaching and learning are good; teaching in just over a quarter of lessons is very good and occasionally excellent.
- The leadership and management of the school are good and give clear direction for the school to improve.
- The attitudes of pupils and their relationships with each other and teachers are generally good.
- The attendance of pupils is consistently good.
- Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good.
- Parents are supportive and make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The standards of attainment of some pupils.
- Teaching in science and religious education.
- The quality and quantity of resources for teaching information and communication technology.
- The use of learning assistants to focus on the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- The standard of accommodation.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996 and has made satisfactory progress since then. Development planning has improved, with all departments producing plans linked to the school improvement plan. However, there is no long-term strategic plan to give overall direction for school improvement planning. Improvement in the curriculum has been satisfactory although there are still some timetabling problems and there is no religious education in the Sixth Form. The process of consultation between staff has improved and is valued by the majority of staff as a constructive way to plan school improvement. Cultural provision has improved significantly. Provision for spiritual development, however, remains unsatisfactory and the statutory requirement for collective worship is still not met. The quality of assessment has improved and is continuing to develop. Assessment information is used to set targets and to guide curriculum planning. Reports to parents are generally informative and set realistic targets for improvement. The capacity for further improvement is good.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and Sixth Form students at the end of Year 13, based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	B
A Levels/AS Levels	A	A	N/A	N/A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2001, standards obtained by pupils were well above average. The proportions of pupils obtaining Level 5 or higher were well above national averages in English, mathematics and science and were well above the averages for similar schools. Trends in recent years have been upwards at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Inspection evidence broadly supports this, although standards are a little lower in the current Year 9 but overall are above average. Taking into account these pupils' attainment on entry to the school, their progress is good.

In the GCSE results in 2001, attainment was above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades and five or more A* to G grades was broadly average though lower than the previous year. Nevertheless, progress was good considering attainment on entry to the school, and satisfactory considering attainment in the end of Year 9 tests taken two years earlier. Results were close to the school's realistic targets. Results were best in geography, and pupils exceeded expectations. Inspection evidence broadly reflects examination results and progress is generally satisfactory. Over time, results have improved in line with improvements nationally.

Standards in the Sixth Form vary from year to year but were broadly in line with expectations in 2001, taking GCSE examination results into account. Results were best in design and technology, and above average in English literature, art, biology, business studies, and physical education. Results were below average in chemistry, physics, mathematics,

geography, history and general studies. Students make good progress during their time in the Sixth Form.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. However, support for pupils is not always used effectively, for example in English, science and religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are generally good. They enjoy coming to school and for the most part they work hard and take pride in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good in lessons and satisfactory around the school. A small proportion, mostly involving boys, is silly and disruptive, most noticeably around the school between lessons and at lunch and break times.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good overall. Relationships are generally good, with some friendships across the age and racial boundaries. While the majority of pupils work closely together, some do not and do not respect the values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. It is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 11 teaching is very good or occasionally excellent in about a fifth of lessons, good in nearly a half and satisfactory in about a fifth. It is unsatisfactory in one in 11 lessons, mainly religious education and science. Teaching is generally good in English and mathematics, and satisfactory in science, although it is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor in a significant number of science lessons in Years 10 and 11. In science the unsatisfactory teaching is associated with low expectations of pupils' behaviour and standards of work. In the Sixth Form, teaching is very good or better in just over two fifths of lessons, good in half and satisfactory in the rest. Teachers have consistently high expectations, use a wide range of teaching methods and use assessment effectively to monitor students' progress and give them guidance and support to help them make better progress.

The most significant features of the best teaching are teachers' extremely good subject knowledge and the quality of relationships, which provide a good environment in which learning can successfully take place. Learning is generally good and pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 11. In the Sixth Form, learning is very good and students perform well taking into account their prior attainment at GCSE.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. The teaching of information and communication technology as part of other subjects is broadly unsatisfactory, predominantly because there are too few computers and access to them is

limited. Absence of information and communication technology means that pupils' and students' opportunities for independent learning are limited.

The needs of the majority of pupils are met, irrespective of their backgrounds and prior attainment. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally sound and pupils' learning is satisfactory and often good. Where support is not used, learning is sometimes unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met, although provision of information and communication technology in other subjects in the main school is inconsistent. Pupils following German in Year 8 have reduced time for physical education. In Years 10 and 11 the grouping together of mathematics and religious education prevents pupils being taught according to their needs in religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is generally satisfactory but the deployment of some support staff is unsatisfactory. They are allocated to some classes at the request of the teacher and not to meet the needs of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is satisfactory overall and for cultural development is very good. Provision for social development is good. Requirements for collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's care for its pupils and students is satisfactory. Procedures for health and safety are sound.

The school has good links with parents. Parents support the school and play an important part in pupils' learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good and provide clear direction for how the school should improve. Most departments are well led and have clear priorities for improvement, reflecting those of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in fulfilling its duties and governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Senior management plans improvements based on its thorough monitoring and evaluation of performance. Evaluation skills are mostly good elsewhere in the school, but they are still developing and have not reached a high level of consistency.
The strategic use of resources	The school has sound financial procedures. It ensures that it obtains best value from available funds through careful costing and linking expenditure to school improvement

	planning.
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The school is well staffed. Resources are unsatisfactory, mainly because there are too few computers for the main school and Sixth Form, although considerable improvements have been made recently. Accommodation is unsatisfactory; religious education and physical education facilities are inadequate; many rooms and windows and roofs are in a poor state of repair.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school. • Children make good progress. • Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of pupils and students. • The school deals with parents' concerns and questions well. • The school is well led and managed. • The school helps children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some pupils. • Consistency in provision of homework. • The information sent home about how well pupils are getting on in school. • How closely the school works with parents.

At the meeting held for parents before the inspection parents expressed their overall satisfaction with the school. They expressed concern at the behaviour of some pupils and their feelings that the school did not deal with poor behaviour well. Inspectors are generally in agreement with the strengths parents identify. Inspectors found that despite parents' concerns, the amount of homework is satisfactory. There is, however, some inconsistency in the use of pupils' journals to record homework so that parents can see what their children should be doing. Inspectors agree with parents that the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory, but mostly teachers deal with problems well. Reports sent home about pupils' and students' progress are satisfactory and there are good working relationships between homes and the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Sixth Form of this average-sized comprehensive school has 71 students in Year 12 and 50 students in Year 13. The catchment area of the school covers a large rural part of County Durham, with many pupils travelling long distances each day. At the end of Year 11, a few pupils opt to attend Sixth Form departments or colleges nearer to their homes; the majority stay on at the school. The trend in recent years has been for between 50 and 55 per cent of the cohort to enter the Sixth Form, which coincides closely to the percentage of pupils who gain grades A* to C in their GCSE examinations. The criterion for entry into the Sixth Form is 5 A* to C grades for an A Level course, and 4 D/E grades for an Intermediate GNVQ course. The school is flexible about these requirements, and students with lower grades have performed successfully in the Sixth Form. The drop-out rate is generally very low, though, unusually, five students have left the Intermediate GNVQ course in the current Year 12: they were all borderline students from the start of the course.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This successful Sixth Form is cost-effective, and serves the local community well. The vast majority of students are academically well prepared for the next stage in their careers. The Sixth Form is well led and managed, teaching is very good overall and particularly so in physical education, art and mathematics. Students make very good progress through their courses. Monitoring and support of students' academic progress and personal development is good, with highly effective review systems in operation across both years.

STRENGTHS

- Students make good progress in the Sixth Form. The most recent data available showed that standards obtained were above average, with boys doing particularly well.
- Teaching is very good and leads to good progress.
- The school offers a broad curriculum, with a wide choice of academic and vocational courses. There is a good programme of extra-curriculum and enrichment opportunities.
- There is a very good relationship between the students and staff. Teachers provide very good personal and academic support.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision for religious education and Key Skills.
- Opportunities for students to become independent learners through better provision of computers.
- Provision of personal, social and health education, incorporating careers advice.
- Preparation for the general studies examination.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English Language	Satisfactory. Standards are improving, with attainment at the national average. Teaching and learning are always at least good, and often very good.
Physical Education	Very good. The very good, and often excellent, teaching, together with the excellent attitudes of the students, leads to very good progress. Standards are in line with the national average.
Mathematics	Good. Students achieve well in their studies. Teaching is very good. The current attainment of students in Years 12 and 13 is very good. Students who took AS Level in 2001 achieved in line with expectations. Results at A Level indicated a 'dip year' in the rising trend of Sixth Form attainment since the last inspection.
Biology	Satisfactory. Teaching is good. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies. Management of the subject is satisfactory.
French	Good. Standards over the last four years have been average. Current achievement in Year 13 is high, but it is variable in Year 12. Teaching is consistently good.
Business Studies	Good. Good standards are being maintained because of good teaching. Students are effective independent learners and have very good attitudes. Learning opportunities outside the classroom are insufficiently planned for.
Art	Very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject. The high quality individual attention and knowledgeable advice contribute towards raising standards. Students have good attitudes, and take responsibility for their own independent learning.
Geography	Very good. After below average A Level results in 2001, standards in the Sixth Form are now rising. Achievement meets the national average in Year 13 and is above average in Year 12. Teaching is good.
Information, and communication technology	Good. Good teaching and learning result in standards above the national average. This is all a result of the department being well led and managed.

Other aspects of Sixth Form provision were sampled, and included one lesson each in design and technology, chemistry, physics, English Literature, religious education, health and social care, and theatre studies, and two lessons in German and music. One Key Skills lesson was observed, attended by only one student. In chemistry and physics, and the Key Skills lesson, teaching was satisfactory; in all other subjects it was at least good; in one of the music lessons it was excellent. Students make at least good progress in most lessons, and achieve good or very good standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance are good. Students are given good advice regarding subject choices. There are regular reviews covering academic and social progress, involving teachers, form tutors, the head of Sixth Form, the headteacher and parents. Careers advice is underdeveloped, but teachers give their time generously to support students.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Sixth Form	Leadership and management are good. Value added and other data is carefully considered in connection with targets set for students to improve their standards. A full programme of enrichment activities is provided for them to broaden their horizons.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the Sixth Form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are accessible to students for extra help and advice. The quality of teaching is good, and work is challenging. There is a good choice of courses to follow. Members of staff treat students like young adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is inadequate careers advice on what to do after school. On-going advice about progress across Years 12 and 13 is inadequate. There could be more enrichment courses and activities specifically for Sixth Form students.

The students are positive about the courses they follow and the support and guidance given by the head of Sixth Form and teachers. They raised a few points which inspection evidence supports. They are concerned about the quality of advice they receive on career opportunities and what higher education expects of them. Careers advice is largely by personal choice and does not have sufficient professional support. Students do not see the value of the Key Skills course; only a very small minority of Year 12 students attend. Several students consider that they receive poor preparation for the General Studies course. In the current year there is no taught course; students are given past papers to practise with. Their concerns are well founded – 2001 results were below average. Many students feel that they have inadequate opportunities for independent learning and research. Inspection evidence supports this. The availability of appropriate computers is limited, and the library is often noisy and has no quiet area for personal work. Despite this, the majority of students enjoy being members of the Sixth Form, and would recommend it to others. They feel that they are respected members of the community and have considerable regard for their teachers. The inspection team considered that advice about students' progress in the Sixth Form is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school in 2001 was well above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science, reflecting a general rising trend in attainment on entry to the school, due in part to changes in the school's catchment area. The attainment of girls on entry to the school is higher than that of boys.

2. Standards obtained by pupils taking the national tests in Year 9 in 2001 were well above average overall in English, mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 or higher was well above the national average in all three subjects. For those obtaining the higher Level 6 or better it was well above average in English and science and very high compared with the national average in mathematics. Compared with their standards on entry, progress has been good. Standards have risen in recent years and at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Compared with similar schools, standards were well above average both for those pupils obtaining average levels or better and those obtaining the higher levels or better. Generally girls performed better than boys.

3. Inspection evidence broadly matches the results of national tests. Standards obtained by 14 year olds are above average overall, though a little lower than those indicated by tests taken in the previous year, but this is in line with a slightly lower attainment on entry for the particular year group. Girls perform better than boys. Standards are broadly average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. They are well above average in geography and history, above average in design and technology and music and broadly average in art, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. They are below average in religious education. Progress is good from when pupils enter school and in music it is very good, owing to some very good teaching. Progress is satisfactory in English, science, art, French and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in religious education.

4. By the time pupils are 16, standards are above average overall with the great majority of pupils having good success at GCSE. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grades, five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G grade was average. Compared with their performance on entry to the school, their progress has been good. The average points scored by pupils was above average. Over recent years this has steadily increased in line with the improvement seen nationally. The school's targets were realistic and GCSE results were close to those expected. Results were best in geography and worst in German where there had been staffing difficulties. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are well above average in geography and history, above average in mathematics, science, design and technology and drama, and average in English, art, ICT, French, music and physical education. They are below average in German and religious education. Girls performed better than boys and over several years this has been the general picture. However, there are variations, and in 2000, for example, boys' results were above the national average for boys and girl's results were close to the average for girls.

5. Progress is satisfactory across Years 10 and 11. It is good in mathematics, art, design and technology, geography, history, music and the GCSE physical education course. It is satisfactory in English, science, ICT, French and core physical education. Progress in religious education and in some science lessons is unsatisfactory because teaching is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the highest attaining pupils, and management of pupils is ineffective.

6. In the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses standards are broadly as expected, but progress by the pupils entered for these courses is mostly unsatisfactory; the majority of pupils either have learning difficulties or are disaffected from school. However, the school is aware of the difficulties and is working hard to develop teaching styles better suited to involving pupils successfully in their own learning.

7. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is generally satisfactory and often good because teachers plan their lessons to match pupils' capabilities. In a few lessons, noticeably in science, English and religious education, pupils with SEN make unsatisfactory progress. In science is sometimes due to unsuitable deployment of learning assistants and elsewhere because work is not always sufficiently tailored to pupils' needs.

8. Standards in literacy are broadly average. The majority of pupils at all levels speak confidently, encouraged by interesting discussion, for example in geography, English, history, music and drama. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when there were few opportunities for pupils to talk or engage in discussion. However, in religious education and science opportunities for useful discussion are often missed. Standards in reading have improved and are now sound and encouraged in most subjects. Standards in writing are satisfactory across most subject areas. Pupils write competently for a variety of purposes in drama, English and design and technology and use technical language with increasing accuracy.

9. The general level of numeracy within the school is good and supports learning across the curriculum. Pupils display very good numeracy skills in their work in geography, history and design and technology.

10. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum are unsatisfactory overall. Skills are well developed in English and modern foreign languages, and in design and technology pupils have above average skills in modelling and control. Pupils' skills are developing well in history and geography, for example in applying knowledge of desktop publishing and the construction of web pages. However, in science, pupils do not experience enough ICT through, for example, data-logging or remote measurement, and in art and religious education pupils encounter very few opportunities to use ICT.

Sixth Form

11. Students in the Sixth Form reach above average standards overall, and their achievement is good. The average points score for those doing two or more A Levels or equivalent, was above average in the most recent results (year 2000) for which overall national comparative information is available. Compared with results from all Post 16 schools, students achieved well, and they achieved very well when compared to the results from maintained schools. Candidates from the school entered for two or more A Level, AS

equivalent and Advanced GNVQ examinations gained average points scores of 18.8 per candidate compared with the average 17.6. Students taking GCSE re-sit examinations gained results in line with the national average in 2001: 17 students were involved. This was an improvement upon the previous two years.

12. In the AS and A Level results in 2001, results were lower, but generally in line with predictions based on the performance of pupils at GCSE in 1999. At A Level, results were well above average in design and technology, above average in English literature and average in art and design, biology, business studies, English language and physical education. They were below average in chemistry, general studies and geography and well below average in physics, mathematics and history. There were too few students in French, German and theatre studies to make national comparisons; however, all candidates gained A-E grades in German and theatre studies and three of the four did so in French.

13. Inspection evidence shows above average levels of attainment, particularly in mathematics, art, biology, business studies and ICT. Most students enter the Sixth Form with appropriate qualifications, and they achieve well. Students achieve very well in mathematics and in French. The high quality teaching across the Sixth Form, and particularly in physical education, art and mathematics, together with the very good attitudes of the students are central to the reason why attainment is good. Most students do not understand the necessity for improving their key skills, which would contribute towards a further raising of standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Attitudes are good overall and most pupils behave well in lessons. Relationships with each other and most teachers are good. These constructive relationships support their achievements and this enables pupils to serve the school and community in a responsible and mature manner.

15. The majority of pupils concentrate well and persevere to complete their work. They co-operate well and work effectively in small groups and they respond enthusiastically to questions and discussions. When good teaching gives them some responsibility for their own learning they work hard at investigative work and research. This was particularly evident in some English, mathematics, science, physical education, geography and history lessons. A small but significant number of pupils are disruptive and display poor attitudes and behaviour. This is associated with uninspiring teaching, and occasionally the poor condition and décor of some classrooms and was evident in some English, science, religious education, and physical education lessons.

16. Behaviour is satisfactory around the school. Most pupils are friendly and polite to teachers, visitors and mid-day supervisors. They conform to the school rules and behave appropriately. However, a significant minority, mostly boys, engage in disruptive and anti-social behaviour of an immature, and occasionally aggressive, racist or sexist, nature. This behaviour is most evident when pupils move between lessons and at lunch times. At various times pupils were observed running along the corridors, behaving in a boisterous manner with deliberate lack of consideration for others, including visitors. The school is working to address these concerns and to ensure consistency in the way in which staff deal with unacceptable behaviour.

17. Since September 2001 there have been 23 fixed period exclusions, which is lower than the national average for the size of the school. Almost all those excluded were boys and most were in Years 10 and 11. The school manages exclusion well and provides adequate levels of academic and pastoral support during exclusion time and after re-integration into school. Parents and staff, as well as external specialist agencies, are working together to reduce exclusions.

18. The level of involvement of pupils in extra-curricular activities is high. Large numbers of pupils use computers enthusiastically at lunchtimes, developing their ICT skills. They use the library extensively as an area to work, to do homework and to socialise and this makes learning a natural part of their out-of-lesson activities and contributes significantly to pupils' achievements. Pupils participate in a wide range of out of school games and activities, including table tennis, chess, choir, soul band, theatre visits, trips to the Lakes, France and Germany; this provides many opportunities for pupils to develop good relationships and enables them to use their leisure time in a constructive and purposeful manner. Most pupils value these activities and appreciate the time and effort that teachers put into them.

19. Pupils have positive perceptions about the school and appreciate the care and support provided by staff. They feel that most teaching is purposeful and many lessons are interesting and challenging; they are also aware of where teaching is undemanding.

20. Relationships are good between teachers and pupils and play a valuable part in lessons. Relationships between pupils are good and friendship groups support pupils' achievements and contribute to their personal and social development. Pupils in all years have the opportunity to undertake a range of responsibilities as members of the school council, or as class monitors, and to support their school and wider community through work experience and fund raising. These activities are undertaken in a responsible and mature manner and help pupils to become responsible citizens of their school and community.

21. Pupils enjoy coming to school. The level of attendance is consistently good and above average for similar schools. Unauthorised absences are broadly in line with the national average and this is due to the hard work of staff and the support from the educational welfare officer. Registers are taken at prescribed times and comply with statutory requirements. Parents and pupils are encouraged to report all absences and most parents and pupils support the school's efforts. A very small minority of pupils are late for lessons and the school has some concerns about internal truancy, but staff continue to develop strategies to discourage truancy and poor time keeping.

22. Since the last report the school has sustained the good attitudes evident in the last report. These positive features are significant strengths of the school.

Sixth Form

23. Most students have very good attitudes to the school and learning. Their behaviour, values and relationships contribute very effectively to their achievements, and promote a harmonious and friendly environment for learning. Relationships are good and play an important part in students' learning. Students enjoy working in groups and independently. This was particularly evident in a number of mathematics, English and business education lessons. Most students show enthusiasm and take pleasure from their work. This was particularly evident in a Year 12 business studies lesson, where students built on their own previous research and used the information very effectively to investigate the topic further.

24. Students' attitudes to visitors and younger pupils are often constructive and purposeful. They value opportunities to help pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 by sharing reading and other learning activities. This help and support helps to raise academic standards in the school and encourages a positive attitude to learning inside and outside of the classroom. However, very occasionally some students are silly and immature; this affects the attitude of others and sets inappropriate examples for younger pupils.

25. Personal development is very good. Students organise social and recreational activities for members of the local community and serve as mentors for younger pupils. They also organise the Sixth Form ball and entertainment and initiate and develop fund raising events, which raise money for a number of national charities. They are involved in the school council and provide some mediation between the staff and council. These activities are undertaken in a responsible, caring and mature manner, enhancing students' sense of responsibility and citizenship and further developing their organisational skill.

26. Attendance is consistently good. Students respond well to the school's efforts to secure good levels of attendance and punctuality. Mutual co-operation between staff and students ensures that absences are appropriately recorded and investigated. The existing arrangements effectively support students' standards and ensure they continue to achieve and set good standards of attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. Teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. In the Sixth Form teaching is very good and elsewhere it is good. In Years 7 to 11 teaching is very good or occasionally excellent in about a fifth of lessons, good in nearly a half and satisfactory in about a fifth. It is unsatisfactory in one about in eleven lessons, mainly in religious education and science.

28. The best teaching builds strongly on the good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils and provides an environment in which heated discussion is a healthy part of the learning process. In many subjects, for example, geography, history, English and the best science lessons, the level of debate is high, with pupils encouraged to explore their ideas knowing that they will be helped and supported. In these lessons expectations are high and pupils respond well. Teachers expect pupils to think and explain for themselves, for example, about the factors causing population migration in parts of Africa.

29. Teachers' subject knowledge is a contributory factor in pupils learning well. It leads to accurate explanations, careful prompting and questioning, and preparation of high quality teaching materials from which pupils benefit well.

30. In the great majority of lessons teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, including pupils whose behaviour around the school is unacceptable. High expectations, firmness in dealing with potentially disruptive situations and good pace help to maintain a good working atmosphere. Teachers indicate to pupils what is expected of them, provide support and show them how they can improve their work further. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and helps them to enjoy their lessons.

31. The range of teaching methods used is generally good, and it is significant that where pupils are taught to think and make decisions they learn well. This is evident in several subjects, but noticeably in some history and geography lessons and also in design and

technology. The school is aware that a significant number of pupils are unwilling to think and to take part in learning activities. Where teachers have overcome this reticence, through challenging questioning and encouragement to learn independently, and where pupils are starting to participate in activities, learning is often very good.

32. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, low expectations, slow pace of work and failure to implement the school's approaches to maintaining good behaviour lead to unsatisfactory learning by many pupils and the disrupted learning of others. This was seen in some science lessons; in some religious education lessons expectations and pace of work were the main factors leading to unsatisfactory learning.

33. The learning needs of the great majority of pupils are well met irrespective of their backgrounds or previous attainment. Teachers take into account the special needs of pupils and ensure that they are given work which challenges them, whether they are in mixed ability classes, in sets or in withdrawal groups. In history and in the Year 7 withdrawal group teachers are skilled at encouraging pupils to think effectively about their work and use teaching techniques which help them to become confident and to work in co-operation with each other. Teachers are well supported by learning support assistants who help to ensure that pupils make satisfactory or better progress. However, in some lessons, notably science, learning assistants are not used effectively even when they are available, and pupils with SEN make unsatisfactory progress.

34. Teaching of literacy skills is generally sound. Reading is encouraged in almost all subject areas: wide reading occurs in English, drama, design and technology, mathematics and geography; gifted pupils complete extended reading assignments in history. However, opportunities for encouraging wider reading are often missed in religious education. The majority of teachers pay closer attention to pupils' standards in writing than at the time of the previous report. Most departments, except religious education, display subject specific key words in their classrooms; most show consistency in correcting technical errors in writing, although not consistently in religious education. Effective strategies are in place for encouraging good writing in geography and history.

35. Many subject areas use, or make contributions to, the numeracy skills of pupils. For example, in geography lessons there are opportunities for pupils to collect and tabulate data and to present a variety of graphs and pie charts using computers. In design and technology pupils develop their use of number, measurement and graphic skills. During history lessons pupils analyse data, produce timelines and develop a variety of uses for statistical presentations, for example to demonstrate the success of a politician's career. In art, pupils' skills of proportion and scaling are developed and also their understanding of basic geometric shapes.

36. Teaching of ICT within other subjects is unsatisfactory, although there is some good practice in English, modern foreign languages, and design and technology. In other subjects there is some development with staff undergoing training although many have not yet been trained. The range of ICT skills taught varies considerably from subject to subject and there is no effective monitoring to identify what skills are taught. A significant minority of staff do not yet feel confident in teaching ICT within their subject.

Sixth Form

37. In the Sixth Form, teaching is very good overall and in just over two fifths of lessons it is very good or sometimes excellent. Teaching is good in half of lessons and satisfactory in the rest; teaching is never unsatisfactory. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was almost entirely good or better. In the sampled subjects, chemistry, physics, design and technology, English literature, theatre studies, music, religious education, German, health and social care, and key skills, three quarters of the teaching was good or better. Teachers have consistently high expectations, use a wide range of teaching methods and use assessment effectively to monitor students' progress and give them guidance and support to help them make better progress.

38. Teachers demonstrate very good, and often exceptional, command of their subjects, and they are fully conversant with the specific subject demands of the examination syllabuses. Lessons are very carefully planned. There are high levels of challenge in class work, and students know exactly what they must do to improve their standards of work. Teachers expect students to think for themselves, and work out their own solutions to problems. They often do this through carefully targeted questioning. Deadlines are strictly adhered to. Students appreciate the fact that their work is assessed and returned to them quickly, and they respond positively to constructive criticism.

39. Communication skills are not taught as a separate subject, but are integrated into subject teaching. This method is successful; students take their own notes from the teacher's presentation and the material is analysed by students working in small groups. This puts some responsibility on to students. They react maturely and learn well, taking down important facts and explanations and this is confirmed by detailed scrutiny of their folders.

40. The lack of provision of Key Skills in the Sixth Form reveals itself in some subjects. Key skills are not built into schemes of work in biology, and they are undeveloped in mathematics. There are a few instances of good practice. Numeracy is well supported in mathematics, and provision is satisfactory in other subjects. There is a good use of vocabulary in English, and an interesting use of poetry in physical education. A new language laboratory in the modern foreign languages department is proving to be a useful aid for the teaching of ICT, though there have been some initial teething problems. Technology for changing and sharpening colour is used effectively in art. In design and technology, ICT is used for the presentation of work, and for graphic design and drawing.

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

41. The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad, balanced and relevant and meets statutory requirements. In Years 7 to 9, drama is taught along with music as part of a performing arts department. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8 and will be included in Year 9 from September 2002. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 reflects the above average attainment on entry to the school. The school disapplies a small number of pupils from modern foreign languages so that they can take work-related courses. Although this alternative course runs in Year 11 there were too few interested pupils to run the same course in the current Year 10. The local authority makes off-site provision for a small number of pupils who have SEN and for whom the school provides funds.

42. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection, but a number of timetabling issues restrict the equal opportunities of some pupils. For example, pupils who choose to follow German as a second language in Year 8 lose time from physical education. In the examination courses there is substantial blocking together of subjects so that pupils are in the same sets for mathematics and religious education in one block and science, English and modern foreign languages in another. Few pupils achieve equally in all subjects but the set in which they are placed is fixed by attainment in mathematics in one block and by overall attainment in the other, so that it is difficult to move a pupil from one set to another to meet individual need in one subject. Changes are planned for September 2002, and a governors' curriculum committee working party is reviewing the curriculum balance for pupils aged between 11 and 14 to address remaining issues.

43. Whilst provision for those pupils with SEN is generally satisfactory, the allocation of some support staff is inappropriate and not planned well enough to meet pupils' learning needs. For example, one support assistant allocated to a science set that included a number of pupils with special need was transferred to help another teacher deal with misbehaviour.

44. The school has a learning support base that offers individual sessions for pupils who are having difficulties settling to work in the main classes, and a behaviour support teacher provides further skilled support to pupils. The organisation and quality of support for the lowest attaining pupils is satisfactory and helps them to have access to the curriculum and to achieve at least satisfactory standards relative to their potential. Individual education plans (IEPs) are available in all departments and teachers are increasingly taking them into account in planning lessons for pupils with SEN.

45. The Year 7 withdrawal group allows pupils with the greatest needs to be taught together for some of the time to give them the close attention, which they need if they are to make best progress. This organisation helps to improve pupils' learning in basic subjects as well as their thinking skills, the way in which they work with each other, and their self-esteem and self-confidence. The learning support base is regularly used by individual pupils who need to complete their work without the stresses of being in the classroom. Pupils are increasingly able to recognise their own particular learning needs and to take limited time out in the base. It is increasingly recognised that some pupils' progress is being inhibited by their behaviour and not by their intellectual capability.

46. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are satisfactory though there is not yet a policy for supporting the transfer of good numeracy skills into the subjects of the curriculum. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory but plans for 2002 are good and include a Computer Literacy and Information Technology course (CLAIT) to be taught in personal, social and health education (PSHE) time in Years 10 and 11 and the inclusion of ICT in the curriculum for Year 9. However, there are no monitoring arrangements to measure the progress with which knowledge and skills in ICT are acquired. The school cannot therefore evaluate whether the use of ICT skills to support learning is improving or not.

47. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good despite the fact that most have to take place at lunchtime. New performing arts teachers have pursued a vigorous policy of artistic enrichment including regular visits to distant theatres in Newcastle and an expansion of group and individual musical performance, as well as annual school performances. The physical education department has a wide variety of teams and clubs. Other staff are also involved with school teams. There are inter-form competitions to encourage participation in mixed teams. Girls receive football coaching from a local Premiership club.

48. The programme for personal social and health education is good. It is well organised, is taught throughout the school and covers a wide range of subjects and issues such as citizenship, the environment and health education. There is adequate drug education and a sensible programme of sex education supported by outside drama groups and speakers, including health visitors. The themes taught in each year are well matched to pupils' maturity. In Year 7 pupils cover aspects such as bullying, in Year 8 they work in groups to gain understanding of how communities are formed and in Year 9 they study homelessness. Issues such as Aids are addressed in Year 10 and parenting in Year 11. The attitudes of pupils to the subject are mainly good; they enjoy the wide variety of experience offered.

49. Careers advice is good and is also provided as part of the PSHE timetable. Emphasis is put on job applications and interview techniques in the upper years. Other than the head of department, different staff teach the programme each year and this has some impact on the continuity of learning, although documentation is detailed and very supportive. The co-ordinator is experienced and well qualified but has insufficient time to train new staff and organise and co-ordinate the PSHE and careers courses. Provision for work experience is good; all pupils have two weeks' work placement and the quality of careers advice is broad and good.

50. Links with the community and with partner institutions are satisfactory. The business education teachers have good links with local commerce, particularly the local leisure centre; the physical education and performing arts departments make use of local teachers in the community and pupils are members of the local youth theatre. New governors have a clear vision of how to involve the school more closely with major providers in the communities of the dale.

51. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall. As at the time of the previous inspection opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually are unsatisfactory. The legal requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship is still not being met. There is no thought for the day or week to help form tutors in registration time. Pupils have few planned opportunities for reflection in lessons. In history, pupils reflect on death and dying, for example, in a Year 9 lesson when pupils considered the concept of a noble death in relation to the sacrifices made by the Northumberland Fusiliers in trench warfare in World War I. In English, pupils use poetry and drama to explore human relationships; one pupil's poem, which won a national poetry competition, was a moving reflection on the human consequences of war. In geography pupils have listened to African music reflecting the mood of large populations having to move from the countryside into the cities. In art pupils have worked with the religious education department to produce images of Christ and Christianity. At Christmas time pupils take part in a festival of lessons and carols in local churches, singing and playing music. The school's Holocaust week involved pupils in visiting the Holocaust centre in Nottingham and a Holocaust survivor visited the school and talked with pupils. The excellent library display of the Holocaust story, arranged by the library assistant, continues to give pupils opportunities for reflection on man's propensity for good and evil. However, there is no whole-school policy to promote pupils' spiritual development and what takes place is unco-ordinated.

52. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. There is a behaviour code in every classroom and respect and tolerance for others is a school aim. In the great majority of lessons teachers set good examples of right and wrong and pupils develop a good understanding of these. Lessons in history and geography include topics which involve

pupils considering the moral issues behind certain actions and developments. There are a good number of awards for achievement, effort and attendance and certificates for these are presented at assemblies. Monthly achievement assemblies recognise the work and effort pupils make in and out of the classroom.

53. Pupils' social development is good. Pupils have good opportunities to exercise responsibility as members of the school council or as form or sports representatives or library monitors. Extra-curricular provision is very good, particularly in sport and music and there are opportunities for pupils to take part in trips both at home and abroad. Pupils help to run the school bank and take part in industry days and the Young Enterprise scheme. There are annual musical and dramatic productions. All pupils do two weeks' work experience in Year 10. At the end of the school year an Activities Week involves pupils and teachers in a wide range of activities. Years 7 and 9 have residential weeks at a local outdoor centre which foster a sense of community with common inclusive values, and help pupils to develop the social skills necessary to survive in a mutually reliant environment. The PSHE programme provides opportunities for pupils to understand and debate social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse.

54. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. In a number of subjects pupils are given the opportunity to study their own cultural inheritance and to learn about other cultural traditions. In religious education lessons pupils develop an appreciation of religious beliefs and values of cultures other than their own, such as Hindu culture and Muslim culture. There are visits to a Hindu temple in Newcastle and a Muslim mosque in Middlesbrough. Pupils have a very positive approach to artistic and cultural enterprises and there are regular trips to local theatres and museums. There are annual music productions and a summer musical concert. There are visits to study centres in France and Germany and ski trips to the Austrian Alps. In 2000 there was a trip to Oberammergau for the Passion Play. Local authors have held writing workshops and pupils studying art have worked with an artist-in-residence at Bowes museum. Most subjects make effective contributions in developing pupils' awareness of different cultures to their own, for example in history where pupils learn about the Black Power movement in the USA, and in music where Indian, Chinese and Caribbean music is taught.

Sixth Form

55. Through its Post 16 curriculum provision, the school aims to accommodate the individual needs of students, rather than require them to choose subjects from set options columns. The principle works successfully in most cases.

56. Just over half of Year 11 pupils regularly continue into the Sixth Form. A few move into other Sixth Forms or colleges, principally because those establishments are nearer to their homes. A small minority are encouraged to go elsewhere, as the courses they wish to follow are not on offer at this school. Students start Year 12 with a timetable which can consist of four AS Levels (or GNVQ equivalent), three AS Levels (or GNVQ equivalent) and Key Skills, or an Intermediate GNVQ course with perhaps an AS or GCSE re-sit in English or Mathematics. Following consultation, some students may begin with five AS subjects. Relatively few students withdraw from courses they have started, though, unusually, five low-level starters on a GNVQ Intermediate course have dropped out in the current year.

57. The curriculum provides a wide range of academic subjects, including two foreign languages, music, theatre studies, business studies, sociology and psychology. Vocational courses on offer include Intermediate Level GNVQ leisure and tourism and business studies, and Advanced Level leisure and recreation, travel and tourism, and health and

sociology. Work placements are appropriate, and the business department has good relationships with local firms, including the local leisure centre. Visiting speakers give relevant information, as exemplified by one speaker detailing the costs of setting up a business in Barnard Castle. Students have a clear understanding of their own achievement, and what they must do to achieve the required standard to qualify for their defined career objectives.

58. Most students do not study any form of religious education in the Sixth Form, or take the Key Skills course which focuses on numeracy and ICT. A large proportion of students take the general studies examination in Year 13; they are not taught as a preparation for this, but answer questions from old papers which are marked by the teachers. This is inadequate provision. The vast majority of the current students state that the choice of courses allows them to follow a programme suited to their talents and career aspirations.

59. Many students become involved with various enrichment courses. These include participation in the Community Sports Leaders Award Scheme, and the opportunity to become a Millennium Volunteer. Students are encouraged to take a work experience placement. In addition, students are involved in visiting elderly people in the town, providing reading practice for pupils in the lower school, playing in various musical groups, raising funds for charity, assisting staff with the organisation of activities week, sports day, Year 7 swimming gala, team games, running football teams, being involved in community projects and helping to produce the school newspaper. Over 80 per cent of the student community is involved in, and produces, a large and popular annual Christmas show.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. The arrangements for child protection and the provision for pupils' care, support and guidance are satisfactory. The pastoral provision ensures pupils' well-being and safety and this enables them to learn in a safe and secure environment. Governors and staff ensure there is an appropriate policy for health and safety and systems are in place to ensure that the school community learns in a safe and secure environment. However, there are some classrooms, and outdoor accommodation, which are in poor condition and have implications for pupils' well-being. The local authority is aware of the many health and safety concerns the school encounters.

61. The school has recently developed a new pastoral system, which enables key stage managers, their assistants and the vast majority of group tutors to provide good levels of individual personal support and guidance. Pupils' achievements are recognised, celebrated, recorded and monitored effectively by a caring, committed and professional team of managers, which is led by a very committed team of senior managers.

62. Specialists and specialist agencies, including the local authority, behaviour support team, educational psychologist, Community and Adolescent Mental Health Team, social services, education welfare officer, school nurse and doctor, continue to provide specialist support, guidance and advice which is used to support the welfare and well-being of the school community further. Nevertheless, the system of referring students to the behaviour and support team for specialist help is not efficient, a deficiency also recognised by the school, and improvements are planned.

63. Disaffected pupils are offered mentoring and counselling by staff and form tutors. There are satisfactory systems in places to ensure sound liaison with the feeder primary school. This enables form tutors to ensure that pupils' transition is smooth and that they build on prior learning.

64. The school has a good PSHE programme, taught by specialist staff. The programme provides informed choices about health, drugs and careers education. These arrangements underpin pupils' individual progress and personal development and enhance self-esteem.

65. The schools' policy on behaviour and discipline is under review because the existing procedures are not implemented consistently. However, many tutors administer good levels of management in the classroom adopting a balanced approach to rewards and sanctions. Lack of consistency means that some pupils do not observe the school's code of conduct, which encourages respect and consideration for others and self-discipline. There is a sound policy to discourage anti-social behaviour, including bullying. Most reported incidents of anti-social behaviour are investigated, recorded, monitored and dealt with by staff, but there are no clear policies and procedures in place to investigate, record, monitor and report incidents of racism. Therefore parents and governors are unaware of the levels of racism, which is sometimes evident in the behaviour, and attitudes of some pupils. The school accepts that its present policies should be reinforced with the recommendations in the MacPherson report.

66. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. Staff take appropriate levels of action to discourage absences by thorough investigation and this helps the school to improve the patterns of pupils' individual levels of attendance. Parents are discouraged from taking family holidays during term time. Rewards are given for excellent and improved attendance. The school is continually seeking ways to improve methods of discouraging internal truancy and the persistent poor time keeping of a small minority of pupils. This approach enables the school to achieve good levels of attendance.

67. The school has maintained the quality of the pastoral support and guidance seen at the last inspection, but procedures for health and safety are now unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory conditions of some sections of the school and outdoor accommodation.

68. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and the use of assessment information to set targets, guide pupils and plan the curriculum is improving, although there is room for continued improvement. Since the last inspection a senior member of staff has been appointed to co-ordinate assessment, as part of the drive to raise achievement. Pastoral teams are helping to raise achievement by taking a more active role in pupils' target setting. Departments have improved the quality of their recording and tracking of pupils' progress through regular assessments and annual reviews of subject performance, resulting in at least satisfactory assessment procedures overall. The information which the LEA supplies to the school about individual pupils' performance is increasingly being used to set challenging targets and to check pupils' progress. This has contributed to raising standards. The changes to the Code of Practice for pupils with SEN mean that subject departments are more active in identifying improvement targets. However, although the school has taken positive steps to consolidate and improve its assessment procedures and use of information, it is not yet using information technology comprehensively enough to provide analyses which will help all teachers in their planning and target setting.

Sixth Form

Assessment

69. The school has very effective assessments systems to monitor, evaluate and set targets for students in the Sixth Form. Statistics provided by County Durham are used to confirm the school's own internal system of prediction of results and will lead to an estimation of likely A Level points in each subject based on the students' average GCSE points scores.

70. The on-going review system across Years 12 and 13 is thorough. In Year 12, AS Level coursework is reviewed regularly to provide predicted grades, recommendations are given about how higher grades might be achieved. Comments are also made on how students are developing socially. Targets are reviewed and altered where necessary. Teachers provide detailed reports on students' achievement, effort and attendance, and guidance to help further progress. Detailed records of modules covered, attainment and progress are kept. Students are encouraged to assess their own performance and the form tutors, the head of year and the headteacher all make final comments. Early in Year 13, a review is made of how students are developing in their ability to meet deadlines, in their contribution to class discussion, in their overall general progress, and in their attendance. Subject teachers make appropriate comments, and give individual guidelines for further development. Students and teachers are involved in reviewing progress made by students, setting targets and predicting probable grades. Form tutors' contributions indicate students' personal development in the Sixth Form, how they have responded to target-setting objectives, and how far on they are with their university and colleges admissions services applications (UCAS). The head of year and headteacher write final remarks.

71. On-going assessment is part of the nature of all vocational courses taken in Years 12 and 13. At all levels, target setting and the system of predicting grades are part of the course. Members of staff teaching vocational courses work hard to encourage course members to become more independent learners, and to be more responsible for the way they strive to gain and improve their own targets.

Support and guidance

72. The quality of support students receive is good. Students demonstrate a strong affinity with their school, appreciating the fact that it is relatively small, that they all get on well together, and that they enjoy a warm, professional relationship with their teachers.

73. Students are well prepared for entry into the Sixth Form, and this is supported by students' views. They receive a considerable amount of information about each subject on offer in the Sixth Form by means of a brochure, individual subject information, an open day, interviews and from a talk by the head teacher. Parents are invited to take part in these procedures at all stages.

74. When students arrive in the Sixth Form in September, their choices are reviewed in the light of their GCSE results. The vast majority of students slot into the subjects of their choice, and are very happy with the quality of teaching and guidance they receive. There are six tutorial groups in the Sixth Form, and students largely choose which group they would like to join. Tutors have a close relationship with members of their groups, and take

a very direct interest in their development. The personal and academic progress of each student is carefully monitored by members of Sixth Form staff, ably led by the head of Sixth Form. Students are confident about approaching staff about social or academic matters as they feel that they are treated as adults.

75. Careers advice is sound and is provided by the head of Sixth Form, a careers officer from Darlington, and through visiting speakers. Students decide whether or not to seek advice. Visits are made to employment fairs. Students rightly express some reservations about the careers advice they obtain. It is too strongly biased towards university education, with relatively little information about other alternatives after the Sixth Form.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. Parents' views of the school are broadly positive. They are pleased with the education the school provides, the progress their children make, the management and leadership of the school, and the quality of teaching. They also feel that the school deals with their concerns effectively. These are strengths recognised by the inspection team. Parents also identified the behaviour of some pupils as being unsatisfactory; this was identified by inspectors too. Parents' view of the Sixth Form is that it provides a good quality education for their children. Those parents, who attended the meeting for parents held before the inspection, or completed the questionnaire, praised the Sixth Form and the work of staff.

77. The overall quality of information provided is satisfactory and there are generally clear lines of communication between home and school. There are regular informative newsletters, the governors' annual report and the school prospectus, all of which are written in a language accessible to parents. The governors' report and the prospectus are informative, interesting and meet statutory requirements. Pupils have personal planners which, when used consistently by teachers, are effective tools to communicate between school and home about homework, and teachers' and parents' concerns. However, teachers do not always complete the planners so that parents know what homework has been set. The end of year pupils' reports, whilst valued and appreciated by parents, do not consistently meet with statutory requirements. They are not consistent in providing information about the knowledge, understanding and skills pupils have attained in subjects and are not always subject specific enough about what pupils need to do to improve. The information provided for parents of pupils with SEN is reliable and satisfactory. Consultation evenings to discuss pupils' progress are regular and are attended by large numbers of parents.

78. Parents make an effective contribution to their children's learning at school and generally provide sound support in the home. Many parents actively support events, residential visits, extra-curricular activities and drama performances, and also support the parents and teachers association. Amongst the many contributions made by parents is the £20,000 raised for the refurbishment of the library. This generous financial support helps to raise standards. Most parents support their children by ensuring they attend regularly and on time.

79. Since the last report, the school has improved its links with parents and sustained the sound levels of communication, which were evident in the last report.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a strongly held view of how the school should develop and improve, and this view is supported effectively by the leadership team and the majority of other staff. Job descriptions are clear and are continually improved to match the development needs of the school. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in how the school is managed and this has provided a sharp focus on what the school needs to do to improve.

81. Much has been done to improve the school. Some changes in responsibility have led to improved management. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and support and training where necessary have led to improved teaching. However, there are still areas for improvement both in management at departmental level and in teaching. Changes in departmental management have led to heads of department taking responsibility for the standards of teaching in their subjects and for raising standards achieved by pupils and students. In most departments the quality of teaching has benefited and standards have started to rise. The most effective teaching practices are identified and shared between colleagues. Targets for improvement are set and progress towards them is monitored. In science and religious education improvements have not been fast enough and in science there has been resistance to changes intended to raise standards in spite of support provided by senior management. Improvements in teaching have raised the level of debate about quality of teaching, resulting in teachers establishing their own working groups to focus on various aspects of teaching and learning that can improve standards achieved by pupils and students.

82. The school's procedures to monitor and evaluate its own performance are broadly satisfactory. In the senior leadership team, evaluation skills are very good and plans to effect improvements are perceptive and sensitive to pupils' and teachers' needs. These skills are developing well at departmental level with good support from senior staff and the local authority. However, there is still room for further improvement in using lesson observation to share good practice and in using assessment information rigorously to guide teaching and curriculum improvements and to set targets for pupils.

83. The school's development plan has sound priorities for improvement, reflected in most departmental plans. Targets and timescales are realistic, although success criteria are occasionally too general. However, priorities are generally short or medium-term and there is no long-term strategic plan to guide the school's overall development. Governors, senior staff and other staff have some understanding about the school's long-term priorities, but they are not consistently the same. For example, there are unclear views over how ICT should develop and how developments should be monitored and evaluated.

84. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is a close working relationship between the headteacher and governors in which there is close co-operation on how problems should be resolved. The governors fulfil most of their statutory duties effectively. They have not ensured that there is a daily act of collective worship. Although the teaching of ICT does not fully meet statutory requirements, the recent appointment of an ICT co-ordinator and the purchase of new resources are leading to significant improvements.

85. There are sufficient qualified staff, including technicians and support staff, to meet the demands of most of the present curriculum, including Sixth Form classes. There has been an improvement since the last inspection with the appointment of a technician and a network manager in ICT. However, there are still insufficient staff in physical education, where sports coaches have to be employed instead of specialist teachers for lessons in Years 10 and 11

and in GCSE classes in these years. In PSHE a lack of specialist staff means that different staff teach the subject each year, and this restricts the continuity of pupils' learning. Staff training through INSET has been improved since the last inspection with direct links to individual needs, and departmental and school development plans. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs), and teachers new to the school are well supported. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) receive active support both in the school and through the local education authority (LEA) support network. The unsatisfactory appraisal system in use at the time of the last inspection has been replaced with a structured performance management system. All staff have had personal reviews and have been set performance targets. Specific training is planned to support staff in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. After a hesitant start, training in ICT skills for teachers is now underway. This is urgent as a significant minority of staff are not confident in teaching ICT within their subjects.

86. Resources are unsatisfactory mainly because there are too few computers to support the work needing to be done in most subjects to develop pupils' ICT skills. In the foundation NVQ course the teaching room is equipped with machines, which are neither networked nor compatible with other machines available. Many are in poor condition; one crashed twice during the inspection so that pupils lost all the data they had put in during the lesson. Sometimes pupils are obliged to go round the school to find where a machine may be free so that they can work. However, to the school's credit, the school has acquired new machines in the last eighteen months, but not enough to fully resolve its needs. Other resources are broadly satisfactory although there are shortages of textbooks in English and of modern atlases in geography.

87. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and in some subjects impedes learning. For example, the teaching space for religious education is unsuitable and affects standards. Religious education teachers are obliged to work in an open area that is crossed at the beginning and end of each lesson by the movement of four other classes and is continually used as a short cut by teachers and pupils. Indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are also unsatisfactory. The gym is small for the number of pupils and is often too cold for effective teaching and learning. The tarmac and other external surfaces are in a poor condition and this affects the safety and well-being of pupils and students. During the inspection the outdoor pitches were waterlogged and therefore out of use. Some classrooms used for mathematics, science, geography, design and technology, ICT, art and SEN are in a poor state of decoration. The carpets in the modern foreign language department and other rooms around the school are worn and unsafe. The positive displays in some departments often camouflage the poor conditions of the indoor accommodation. The school has taken decisive action and recently refurbished the library and some classrooms in geography, French, history and science. The canteen area has also been refurbished and the school continues to make extensive and expensive repairs to the windows around the school. The school is unable to fully repair the roof, which is the primary cause of the majority of the accommodation problems.

88. Since the last inspection the accommodation has not significantly improved. However, the school continues to undertake some refurbishment and strives to raise standards and comply with health and safety standards.

89. The quality and amount of available rooms has a limiting effect on the curriculum. The poor condition of an annex at a distance from the school is such that the governors have decided to use it as little as possible. They see the condition of the buildings as demoralising for staff and pupils. The consequence is heavy pressure on rooms on the main site. Even though the school does not admit pupils up to its standard number, the main buildings are overcrowded and in poor decorative order.

90. The school's basic budget was broadly average in the last financial year but because the pupils' economic circumstances are mostly favourable there are fewer than average numbers of pupils receiving free school meals. Beyond its basic budget, the school attracts few additional funds. The school serves a rural area of approximately three hundred square miles that is geographically focused on Barnard Castle.

91. The condition of the premises makes heavier calls than usual on the budget; the annex is particularly expensive to run. The cost of teachers per pupil is higher than in three quarters of schools nationally and long-term sickness absence made very heavy demands on the budget in the last financial year. These additional costs restrict the funds available to support educational change and to finance expensive initiatives. Consequently, though the library is efficiently managed and well used, it is under-stocked and there are insufficient modern computers or technological aids to meet the needs of pupils and students.

92. Changes in the way the local authority finances its schools left Teesdale School temporarily short of about £80,000. Though this will be readjusted, the short-term consequence is that reserves are very low and the school could not meet any costly emergency spending without going into deficit.

93. The governors are very aware of the limits to financial resources and work hard, conscientiously and effectively to balance the budget. They support the head teacher and monitor closely the spending of their approved budget. Spending is also monitored closely to achieve cost-effectiveness and good savings have been achieved on the cost of cover for sickness absence. The school has thorough procedures to ensure that the best value is obtained for the funds it has available. The school gives sound value for money.

Sixth Form

Leadership and management

94. The leadership and management of the Sixth Form are good. The head of Sixth Form is a very experienced teacher who has had this responsibility for many years. His office is adjacent to the Sixth Form common room, ensuring that he has constant informal daily contact with students. He has a thorough knowledge of the personal and academic progress of each student, and a professional but friendly approach with each one. Students have a high regard for him, and feel comfortable taking their problems to him. He is well supported by the head teacher, and by a hard working team of tutors.

95. The governors, head teacher and members of the senior management team have a strong commitment to recognising the unique status of the school, in that it is one of the few in this large, rural area with a Sixth Form. They constantly monitor and review what the Sixth Form offers, in order to meet the demands of the community. They have strong arguments for running a number of small classes in the Sixth Form. They have clear criteria for admitting students into the Sixth Form, but are not inflexible. For example, there have been examples of students who have been admitted with the barest qualifications, but who ultimately have been successful. There is a separate development plan for the Sixth Form which currently focuses on four central targets: these concern the provision of Key Skills, careers advice, the role of the form tutor and the introduction of an electronic application system for UCAS. These are appropriately chosen priorities.

96. Members of the Sixth Form management recognise the inadequacy of the availability of computer technology for student research purposes, and make every effort to accommodate this. They appreciate that a considerable proportion of the student community have computers at home with which they can research, and allow them to study at home when they are not being taught.

Resources

97. Overall, this is a cost-effective Sixth Form, fulfilling the expectations of the students and parents. Students in the Sixth Form achieve well, and make very good progress across both years. Attendance is good, and there is a low level of students withdrawing from courses. Performance is even across subjects, with small differences, and the general standard of attainment is above average. For students taking two or more A Level subjects, the school's average point score in the most recent available information was 20.1, compared to the national average of 18.5 and the LEA average of 16.6. There is a small imbalance between Sixth Form costs and the expenditure of the main school, resulting in a lack of investment in resources in Years 10 and 11. The Sixth Form is relatively small, and there are a significant number of small classes. Students and parents value the breadth of provision of courses, and governors are working hard to attract greater numbers into the Sixth Form.

98. The common room for Sixth Form students is adequate, and is much valued by them. There are certain constrictions on it, as it is immediately connected to the library, and implies the necessity of a low level of noise. The room does not have study facilities, but students are advised which classrooms are free areas for them to go and work in when they do not have taught lessons. There are some computers available to the students, but they are of poor quality and unsuitable. They may also use computers in the technology suite or in specific subject departments if they are free: in practice, this does not really work. Resources for research, and for encouraging students to become independent learners, are unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

99. The school has made significant improvements since it was last inspected, not least in the senior leadership's team capacity to identify development needs and to plan accordingly. The school has a high level of awareness of its areas for development and has already established procedures or plans for improvement. In some case it has initiated improvements which have yet to have a measurable effect, but it is persisting with them.

- The school must now:
 - Raise standards of pupils by;
(Paragraphs: 2, 5, 15, 32)
 - * focusing on the achievements of underperforming boys;
 - * ensuring the highest attaining pupils are equally challenged in all subjects;
 - * sharing good practice in the management of the small proportion of pupils who misbehave.
- Improve the teaching and learning;
 - In science by:
(Paragraphs: 7, 33, 43, 81, 124, 125)
 - * improving management of the subject;
 - * establishing monitoring and evaluation of teaching and setting targets for improvements;
 - * ensuring the best practice in the subject is effectively shared among staff;
 - * deploying learning assistants into classes where there are pupils with learning difficulties.
 - In religious education by;
(Paragraphs: 5, 42, 81, 87, 215, 217)
 - * improving the management of the subject;
 - * improving accommodation so that lessons are not continually interrupted;
 - * grouping pupils for the subject based on their needs in religious education;
 - * ensuring teaching is sufficiently challenging and matched to the needs of all pupils.

- Improve the provision of ICT by;
(Paragraphs: 10, 36, 86)
 - * continuing to increase the numbers of computers;
 - * organising access to computers for other subjects to meet statutory curriculum requirements for ICT;
 - * auditing provision in subjects to ensure full coverage of statutory requirements;
 - * continuing training of teachers to ensure they have the skills to teach ICT within their subjects.

- Deploy learning assistants to focus on the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs.
(Paragraphs: 33, 43)

- Explore ways to improve the standard of accommodation with the LEA in order to:
(Paragraphs: 87, 89)
 - * increase accommodation on the main site;
 - * dispense with the use of the annex;
 - * refurbish existing buildings.

- The school must also;
 - Continue development in the use of assessment data to provide information to set targets for pupils and plan teaching and the curriculum.
(Paragraph: 68)
 - Improve the quality of reports to parents by ensuring that they consistently comment on knowledge, understanding and skills.
(Paragraph: 77)
 - Improve the quality of spiritual development by:
(Paragraph: 51)
 - * providing planned opportunities within the curriculum;
 - * ensuring the school provides a daily act of broadly Christian collective worship.

Sixth Form

- Ensure that the statutory requirements to teach religious education and Key Skills courses to all students are met.
(Paragraphs: 39, 40, 58)
- Increase the numbers and access to computers so that students have opportunities for independent learning.
(Paragraph: 98)
- Provide structured personal and social education incorporating careers advice.
(Paragraph: 78)
- Review and improve the provision for the general studies examination.
(Paragraph: 58)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	126
	Sixth Form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		60

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	4	23	60	28	9	2	0
Percentage	3	18	48	22	7	2	0

Sixth Form

Number	2	18	24	4	0	0	0
Percentage	4	38	50	8	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	763	121
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	82	0

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91	5

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year 1

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	73	80	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	54	59	60
	Girls	73	67	65
	Total	127	126	125
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	83 (71)	82 (72)	82 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	47 (35)	61 (51)	46 (33)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	55	58	60
	Girls	73	68	64
	Total	128	126	124
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	84 (65)	82 (73)	81 (62)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	43 (35)	66 (40)	43 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	65	72	137

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	25	56	59
	Girls	43	70	73
	Total	68	126	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (54)	92 (96)	96 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.1 (41.3)
	National	39.0 (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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	n/a
	National	n/a	n/a

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13)

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	28	15	43

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	23	24	47
	Average point score per candidate	15.1 (23.5)	18.8 (15.6)	17.1 (18.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	n/a (17.1)	n/a (18)	n/a (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	23	22	25	0	2	2
	Average point score per candidate	15.1	18.6	17	n/a	18	18
National	Average point score per candidate	17.8	18.6	18.2	10.2	11.3	10.8

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	882
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	25	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7–Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

Education support staff:

Y7–Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	204

Deployment of teachers:

Y7–Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.7
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Average teaching group size:

Y7–Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	26

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,251,086.00
Total expenditure	2,252,063.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,668.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,414.00
Balance carried forward to next year	21,437.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.9
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
Number of questionnaires returned

884
241

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	63	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	32	61	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	61	15	5	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	60	22	4	2
The teaching is good.	14	77	5	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	56	22	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	51	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	52	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	10	58	22	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	21	64	5	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	20	66	8	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	56	10	5	10

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are supportive of the school overall and feel that it has improved in recent years and provides a good standard of education. Their prime concern is about a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and of poor behaviour by some pupils that is not dealt with satisfactorily. Inspectors agreed with the strengths parents identified and agreed with their observations about some unsatisfactory teaching. Nevertheless, the school is dealing with unsatisfactory teaching by providing support and training where necessary. Inspectors also agreed that there is some poor behaviour, but for the most part teachers dealt with it well. Where behaviour is poor in lessons it is sometimes associated with unsatisfactory teaching.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Attainment in the National Curriculum tests between 1998 and 2001 rose at a faster rate than the national average.
- Attainment and achievement of girls at GCSE is good.

Areas for development:

- Appointment to the permanent position of head of department.
- Raise the aspirations and the attainment of boys.
- Increase the number of lessons with Year 7 classes.
- Provision of resources to meet the requirements of the new framework for English at Key Stage 3.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

100. Attainment at Levels 5 and 6 in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was well above the national average and well above average in comparison with other schools. Teacher assessments were in line with test results. Girls were more successful than boys. Attainment in 2001 indicates that a good measure of value was added to pupils' performance since their entry to the school in Year 7. Apart from a fall in standards in 1999, the upward trend in performance in the National Curriculum tests over the period 1997 to 2001 exceeded the national average.

101. At the end of Year 11 in 2001 the attainment at grades A* to C and A* to G in GCSE English language exceeded the national average, indicating an upward trend over the period 1999 to 2001. The good results of girls in 2001, which significantly exceeded those of boys, showed a good measure of value added bearing in mind their lower than average attainment in the National Curriculum tests in 1999. Boys' attainment in 2001, however, not only fell below standards achieved in 2000 but also fell below the national average for boys. The boys' results in 2001 were in line with expectations bearing in mind their lower than average attainment in the National Curriculum tests in 1999. Few girls, and no boys, attained grade A*.

102. Attainment in 2001 in GCSE English literature exceeded that of 2000 and exceeded national expectations. Although no pupil recorded a grade A* in 2001, a significantly smaller percentage of the full cohort entered the examination than in 2000. Attainment in 2001 in GCSE media studies was below the national average and no pupil attained grade A*. However, attainment was in line with expectations when pupils' previous performance is considered. Moreover, this was the first time the school had entered candidates for this subject; it had been offered as an alternative to English literature. Owing to staffing shortages this popular option has been withdrawn.

103. Observation of lessons shows that the speech of the majority of pupils in Year 9 across the school is intelligible and clear, reflecting an attainment above the national average. Higher attaining pupils show increasing confidence as speakers - in one lesson in Year 8 they spoke with interest on issues in 'Macbeth'. However, a minority of lower

attaining pupils with special needs in English (mainly boys) have difficulty talking fluently and at length about their work in class, although they are able to give clear, brief answers when sure of their information. In Year 11 standards are above the national average overall; pupils speak in Standard English when required to do so in formal situations. The majority listen to instruction and to each other's contributions with attention and understanding; for example, in one Year 10 class pupils spoke with clarity and interest on media issues involving the use of film cameras. However, a minority of lower attaining pupils with special needs in English continue to experience difficulty explaining more complex ideas in a sustained and fluent manner.

104. In Year 9 attainment in reading is above the national average, with most pupils able to read a range of texts across the curriculum with satisfactory accuracy. The library organises an effective Reading Award Scheme. However, some lower attaining pupils (mainly boys with a short attention span) fail to gather full and exact meaning from their reading. Pupils with special needs in English are, with learning support, able to follow continuous lines of meaning appropriate to their understanding; some, however, do not receive sufficient support to meet their needs. In Year 11 higher attaining pupils engage fully with challenging texts, for example with poetry of the nineteenth century. Middle attaining pupils are becoming more accurate in their interpretation of meaning. However, lower attaining pupils (mainly boys) are not sufficiently accurate in their interpretation. Pupils with special needs in literacy become more competent in their reading when provided with learning support.

105. Analysis of pupils' written work indicates that attainment is at the national average, with the vast majority showing at least satisfactory competence across the curriculum. One boy won a prestigious prize in the National Poetry Competition judged by the poet laureate, Andrew Motion. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 write imaginatively and coherently on a variety of topics. The writing of most middle attainers is accurate and explanatory. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special needs in English who are receiving learning support, write with reasonable clarity; however, the quantity of support is insufficient to meet all their needs. By Year 11 attainment in writing is in line with national expectations, with girls showing greater precision and accuracy than boys. Higher attaining pupils show a confident control of a range of styles. Middle attaining pupils develop their ideas logically and clearly; lower attaining pupils (mainly boys) have difficulty sustaining their writing at length on more formal subjects. Pupils with special needs in English are able, with learning support, to sustain a reasonable level of accuracy in their longer pieces of writing; however, the quantity of support is at times insufficient to meet all their needs. Most pupils throughout the age range write legibly but not always neatly enough. Pupils make satisfactory use of word processing skills to produce coursework – but use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons is infrequent.

106. Teaching and learning in lessons observed at Years 7 to 9 were at least satisfactory, and usually good; there were also examples of very good and excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11. Teachers monitor pupils' achievement to set appropriate challenges, but recent long-term staff absences and staff recruitment difficulties have interrupted the continuity of learning at both key stages. The current shortage of teaching time in Year 7 further hinders the achievement of all, particularly that of lower attaining pupils where learning support may not be available. Classes are very large in all years - with some sets of 34 pupils comprising gifted as well as middle attaining pupils studying in crowded, challenging conditions. There are significantly higher proportions of girls in the higher attainment classes. Classes containing pupils with special needs are also large bearing in mind pupils' (mainly boys) behavioural needs, especially where there is no learning support. Teachers show patience and understanding when dealing with the behavioural problems of a minority of boys. The best teaching was observed in Years 10 and 11 in well-ordered classrooms where the brisk

pace ensures good learning; effective questioning draws out pupils' thoughts revealing an enjoyment of ideas. For example, good teaching of 'Macbeth', coupled with the teacher's high expectations, encourages pupils' enthusiasm for Shakespeare and consolidates achievement. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge, enthusiastic and careful in their lesson planning. They serve as good role models and retain harmonious relationships with their pupils.

107. The acting head of department, who took up this temporary position last term, gives clear direction to a team facing uncertainties arising from recent acute staff shortages and long-term staff illnesses. As a result, the improvements in attainment since the previous report, which were apparent in Years 7 to 9 in 2001, are not being maintained amongst lower achievers. Moreover, the GCSE course in media studies, a popular option in 2001, was withdrawn. To improve standards the acting head of department has revised schemes of work for Years 7 to 9; programmes of study for Years 8 and 9 are being updated and effective worksheets are available. However, the department still lacks sufficient texts for full delivery of the new framework for English. The progress of boys is carefully monitored and topics of interest to boys as well as girls are covered. Helpful GCSE programmes of study assist staff create variety in their lessons. At departmental meetings marking and assessment procedures are monitored and standardised. The department provides a range of extra curricular opportunities, which include theatre visits to other towns and to the Royal Shakespeare Company and visits to poetry readings by recognised poets whose work is set at GCSE. An annual 'Readathon' event raises money for charity. Pupils speak with pleasure to visitors to the school about these educational visits, and see them as very helpful to their studies. However, these opportunities are denied to pupils unable to afford the costs of travel from this remote area. Literature from other cultures and traditions is studied; moral issues are discussed as they arise in literature lessons. This busy department makes an effective contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision for mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Teachers are highly motivated and strive to maintain the highest standards.
- Good relationships and support ensure pupils achieve their potential.

Areas for improvement:

- Develop the opportunities for ICT to become a normal learning tool for pupils.
- Develop opportunities for staff to share their high quality teaching skills.
- Improve the quality of the learning environment for students.

108. In Year 7, pupils enter the school with attainment in mathematics above the national average. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests pupils' attainment was well above the national average and standards were well above average when compared with pupils from similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels was very high in comparison to similar schools. This represented very good achievement by pupils. Results in mathematics were above those in English and in science. The attainment of girls was better than that of boys. Over the last three years, there has been a rising trend in attainment, greater than the improvement nationally. The improvement is the result of a combination of factors including good teaching, the adoption of the National Numeracy Initiative (NNI) and the influence of the accelerated learning programme. At the end of Year

11, in 2001, results at GCSE Level were at the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Results indicate that levels of attainment have fallen since the last inspection. However, all students attained a GCSE grade and, overall, students exceeded the target set for attainment by the local education authority (LEA). This represented good achievement by pupils. Girls' results were better than those of boys and average points scores were similar for mathematics, English and science. Numeracy skills are good in all years and support pupils' learning in other subject areas. This is most evident in their use of data and the high quality presentation of graphs, either hand drawn or produced using computers. There was no difference in achievement indicated for different groups of pupils.

109. The standard of work seen in all years is generally above that expected nationally. Learning and achievement in lessons are good and are very good for the most capable students. Year 7 pupils have benefited significantly from the introduction of the National Numeracy Initiative (NNI) and demonstrate more rapid and confident use of mental arithmetic skills than pupils in higher years. The most capable pupils in this year can solve simple equations and calculate angles to produce pie charts. Least capable pupils apply their basic number skills to bar charts, areas of rectangles and the use of symbols for inequalities. By Year 9 most capable pupils work successfully at the highest levels of attainment, working with simultaneous and quadratic equations, trigonometry and volumes of compound solids. In a Year 9 lesson pupils worked with understanding, determining the gradient and intercept for straight-line functions. Good understanding was evident from the searching questions posed by pupils seeking to understand the effect of variations from the standard representation of equations. In Year 9 opportunities are offered for the gifted pupils to take the extension paper with after school support. During lessons less capable pupils improve their strategies for manipulating number and understanding basic concepts, often practising their skills within higher order topics. In a lesson in which pupils were investigating number patterns pupils quickly spotted relationships but were unsure whether they had sufficient evidence to predict further numbers in the pattern. By the end of Year 11 the most capable pupils are working at very high levels of attainment using rational and irrational numbers, solving the general triangle and using vector addition. The most capable students study Statistics as an additional GCSE. During a Year 11 revision lesson pupils were observed calculating means and standard deviations for grouped data. Most showed very good understanding and all were able to successfully apply the many complex formulae.

110. Pupils with special education needs are well supported by teachers and, on occasion, by skilled classroom assistants who help others in addition to target pupils. Pupils' work is often challenging and this has produced good returns in the 100 per cent pass rate in the 2001 GCSE examination. The process for supporting gifted pupils is not formalised. However, students are identified and opportunities are provided for extending their experience, beyond that of the classroom, by provision of extra-curricular lessons, mathematics challenges and entry to higher-level tests.

111. Teaching is good. In lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory and often very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which is utilised to provide insightful, well planned lessons. This was observed in a Year 8 lesson on probability, in which more able pupils were to design a game of chance, which would provide attractive prizes but ensure that the probability of winning was worked out in favour of the bank. Pupils showed understanding of their task and very good understanding of the underlying theory of probability. Where teaching is most successful, teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves and develop underlying concepts related to the topic being studied. There is a good pace to all lessons, which transfers to the way in which pupils work. This was seen in an examination review lesson for Year 11 pupils, in which the rate of progress and the range of topics covered were matched by the pupils' involvement. The enthusiasm shown by

teachers develops interest in the subject for pupils of all abilities. For example, in a Year 7 lesson studying the use of calculators, pupils were eager to understand the use of different keys. The teacher challenged some to research the symbols in the library and report next lesson. The mutual respect between pupils and teachers forms the basis of good relationships and classroom management of pupils and has produced a friendly working atmosphere in which pupils learn well. Pupils experience a variety of learning styles involving whole class work, individual tasks and group investigations. However, the use of ICT has not yet become an integral part of the teaching and learning of pupils. Lessons are less successful when there is insufficient differentiation or challenge in the work provided for pupils. Assessment of pupils' work is good and provides pupils with good understanding of the level at which they are working.

112. Management and leadership of the department are very good. Resources are adequate but very well managed, enabling good progress for all pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory in size and number of rooms but rooms are in a poor state of repair and in need of redecoration. The carpets are also in a poor state of repair and pose a possible threat to the safety of pupils. The overall quality of the accommodation reduces the impact of the posters and pupils' work which decorate the department. All specialist teachers have their own rooms, giving the department a good sense of identity in which pupils expect to learn well. Staffing is satisfactory and the well-qualified part time teachers are used as a flexible asset by the department when there is need for teaching cover.

113. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The department is piloting a new curriculum in Year 10, and statistics GCSE has been introduced as an additional option for more able pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been developed within the department, resources have been developed to improve textbook provision, and the NNI has been successfully introduced in Years 7 to 9. As a result standards of achievement by pupils have risen. To further improve the quality of provision for pupils, the department needs to develop the sharing of good practice to ensure all students are receiving the highest possible standards of teaching. There needs to be a planned development programme for resources, including ICT, which will ensure effective response to curriculum changes. The department must promote efforts to improve the quality and fabric of the accommodation for mathematics teaching.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision for science is satisfactory. However, unless urgent action is taken to improve the unsatisfactory and poor teaching, the provision is likely to become unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- Attainment is well above average by the age of 14 and above average by the age of 16.
- The attitude and behaviour of most pupils and their relationships with teachers is good.
- Assessment procedures and record keeping are good.

Areas for development:

- Leadership and management , which is currently unsatisfactory.
- The significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Skills in experimental and investigative science between the ages of 11 and 16.
- The use of homework, which is unsatisfactory at present.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning.

114. Attainment of pupils at the age of 14 is well above national expectations as measured by performance in the national tests in 2001. The proportion of both boys and girls achieving Levels 5 and 6 is well above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. There has been improvement in results in the last few years at a rate slightly greater than that seen nationally. The work of pupils in school is also well above average overall but there is a wide range of attainment in lessons and in pupils' written work. Pupils with the highest attainment show very high levels of knowledge and understanding of science compared with national expectations across a wide range of topics such as genetics, and chemical reactions. An accelerated learning group in Year 9 demonstrated high quality thinking skills in solving problems involving the kinetic theory of gases. Pupils with average attainment show good retention of basic facts and principles. The work of pupils with the lowest attainment and of those with special needs is characterised by weak knowledge of science vocabulary, low levels of writing skills and much work which is left incomplete. The development of skills in experimental and investigative science is below expectations for all pupils and there is no consistent focus on this important aspect of pupils' work. For example, the books of a class of pupils in Year 8 showed very little evidence of any practical work which they had planned themselves.

115. Attainment by the age of 16 is above national expectations overall. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, the percentage of pupils reaching at least grade C and at least grade G were above average. Girls attained better results than boys. Significant numbers of boys and girls achieved the very high grades of A and A* but the proportion of those reaching grade C was lower than to be expected from their prior attainment. Work seen in school also shows that some pupils are reaching very high standards across the range of topics, for example in the understanding of the action of transformers and electrolysis. Other pupils with lower prior attainment show limited knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 10 had significant difficulties in identifying energy transfers in given situations. In some lessons in Years 10 and 11, the attainment of pupils is below expectations because the teaching is not challenging enough. Experimental science in Years 10 and 11 is driven to some extent by GCSE coursework requirement and some work is of a very high standard. There is, however, no consistent culture of developing the spirit of scientific enquiry.

116. Standards of scientific numeracy and literacy are adequate for pupils of all ages, although there is no specific focus for developing these aspects of pupils' scientific education. The development of the use of ICT in science referred to in the previous

inspection report has not taken place so that pupils have few ICT learning opportunities within lessons. Pupils with special needs work below expected levels in some lessons because they are not effectively supported or because, in some cases, available external support is not efficiently deployed.

117. Achievement is satisfactory overall between the ages of 11 and 16 but there are some variations. Pupils enter the school with attainment which is well above average and better than in English and mathematics, but by the time they are 16 standards are similar to those in English and mathematics. By the age of 14, pupils build on the knowledge and understanding with which they enter at the age of 11 in all aspects of their work except scientific experiment and investigation. Teachers provide some good learning opportunities to aid young pupils in developing knowledge and understanding. The enthusiasm for science of most pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 provides a good impetus for learning and makes a significant contribution to their achievement by the end of Year 9. Achievement between the ages of 14 and 16 is more variable. Some of the highest attaining pupils achieve well, as shown by the high proportion of top GCSE grades. Their strong motivation and consistent application make major contributions to their progress. However, significant numbers of pupils of all levels of prior attainment underachieve in lessons due to lack of motivation and, in some cases, poor behaviour, both of which are clearly linked to unsatisfactory and poor teaching. This situation, if allowed to continue, is likely to lead to significant underachievement in GCSE examinations in the immediate future.

118. Teaching is satisfactory overall but there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have at least adequate qualifications for the classes they teach and several are well-qualified and have a good many years of teaching experience. In lessons where teaching is good, pupils learn well because teachers clearly establish what they expect pupils to learn during a lesson and adopt a range of methods to achieve these ends. In such lessons there is consistent interaction between teacher and pupils and a variety of activities to push lessons on at a good pace. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the physical separation of substances, a quick review of the previous lesson established continuity using carefully focused questions and the lesson moved on quickly to a well-organised practical activity to give pupils first-hand experience of the technique. A group of pupils from Year 9 with high attainment showed good gains in learning about the structure and function of joints and muscles as a result of a lesson in which the teacher made good demands on their ability to extend to new situations what they had already learned. Pupils contribute significantly to their own learning by their positive attitude and interest in the subject. This is most evident among younger pupils, who enjoy the increased opportunities they have for experimental work compared with primary school and work well together in a co-operative spirit.

119. In half the lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Pupils did not learn effectively in such lessons because, for example, expectations of work and behaviour were too low or because there were no effective strategies for managing the behaviour of a minority of unruly pupils. In a lesson for pupils in Year 11 on ionic compounds, for example, unimaginative use of a textbook as a learning resource led to very little mental activity, low motivation and correspondingly poor behaviour. Lesson time is used ineffectively in some lessons because pupils spend too much time copying from the board or from textbooks. Repetition of work from an earlier stage results in inadequate learning. For example, a lesson on waves and sound for pupils with very high attainment consisted mainly of a trivial repeat of an experiment to test the law of reflection of light and so contributed little to either understanding or motivation. A marked difference is noticeable in the change of attitudes towards science and the decline in motivation of some pupils as they progress through the school from Year 7 onwards. Nevertheless, some sound

teaching results in some Year 11 pupils, for example, making satisfactory gains in their understanding about the reactions of metals.

120. The quality and quantity of marking is variable. Some teachers make useful comments on how pupils can improve their work but the grading of work is mainly limited to indicating pupils' efforts rather than their attainment. Some pupils' books show evidence of not having been marked for some time. Homework does not always extend activities carried out in lessons and it is not always set as regularly as it should be.

121. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There are some strengths within the department but these are significantly outweighed by a need for development in a number of important areas. Assessment of pupils and the keeping of records are good. Pupils are tested regularly using materials linked to National Curriculum or examination specification requirements and this provides a good base from which to judge pupils' attainment at any given stage. Good records are kept and some tracking takes place of how much progress pupils are making towards the computer predictions of future performance provided by the local authority. Some development has recently been done on schemes of work and these are better than they were at the time of the last inspection.

122. The monitoring of the quality of teaching, including teachers' marking, is ineffective. Some weaknesses in teaching, identified at the time of the previous inspection, have not been addressed and are having a significant negative impact on pupils' motivation and attainment, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There is some good teaching, but effective teaching skills have not been identified and shared with a view to improving teaching overall. There are no effective strategies within the department for dealing with challenging behaviour and some teachers who encounter difficulties, in some cases through lack of experience, are left without adequate support. Although much work has been done in developing schemes of work, there is no coherent approach to it and important issues such as the planned development of literacy, numeracy, ICT and provision for pupils with special needs are not being effectively tackled. Departmental planning is weak and there is no strategic plan to raise standards in the department by identifying desired outcomes and assessing the cost in time and resources. Analysis of examination and test results has not resulted in any action to make changes to the curriculum or the ways in which it is taught by teachers. Recent attempts to modify the management structure in science have met with reluctance and resistance to change by some members of staff within the department.

123. The number of laboratories is adequate, although most are in need of some refurbishment and offer an unappealing learning environment in spite of the efforts of some teachers to provide attractive displays of pupils' work. Learning resources of books and equipment are satisfactory for the delivery of the curriculum. The three members of the technical staff continue to provide good support to the work of the department as they did at the time of the last inspection, but the total number of hours they work and the way in which these hours are allocated pose some problems for the servicing of lessons. There is some ineffective use of storage and some chemicals on open shelves in some teaching rooms pose a health and safety hazard.

124. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in standards attained by pupils at the age of 14. Teaching has not improved and issues of behaviour and attitude of some pupils remain. Management is now unsatisfactory. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

The quality of provision in art and design is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' shared commitment to raise standards.
- The increasing numbers of pupils studying the subject to examination level.
- Assessment systems that support learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Making sure the work matches the individual needs of the pupils.
- Structured deadlines for the completion of projects.
- The condition and repair of furniture and parts of the building to create a stimulating functional environment.
- Access to ICT equipment.

125. Results in the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below those reported nationally. In 2001 the percentage of pupils obtaining A* to C grades at GCSE was below average, but the proportion of pupils taking the examination was high. GCSE results were above the national average in 1999 and well above in 2000 but the numbers entered for the examination were small. The number gaining grades A* to G in 2001 was also below average. The performance of boys and girls is inconsistent. Last year boys did better than girls but this year girls did much better than boys.

126. Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are higher than those indicated in the 2001 teacher assessments and are in line with the national average. Pupils are confident at pursuing activities and experiment with materials and images within a range of topics. They apply technical skills reasonably competently and show a developing knowledge of art and artists. Year 9 pupils have a clear understanding of the use of scale and proportion and the use of colour when developing self-portraits in the style of different artists. Higher attaining pupils produce good results when exploring the ideas and feelings of artists such as Paul Klee but this is less evident amongst lower attaining pupils whose response is mainly descriptive. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with an average level of skills and understanding. In Year 7 the structured course gives pupils a sound understanding of the formal elements such as the use of line, tone and texture and they develop skills in a range of techniques. This is built on in Year 8 where pupils translate designs into large papier-mâché drinking vessels in the style of artists such as Matisse. Pupils with SEN achieve well when working in groups with supportive fellow pupils. Boys and girls are achieving at a similar level except in one Year 8 class where the performance of boys is below the expected standard.

127. Standards in Year 11 are at the national average. Pupils reach sound standards when interpreting whole class themes and most use a range of materials and processes to express their creative ideas confidently. They demonstrate the ability to explore and investigate when researching artists as an influence for a project on 'Inside'. For example a pupil experimented successfully with methods used by Munch to produce good quality work using the colour and composition of 'The Scream' as a basis for a composition built around a tiger's mouth. When work is below the expected standard, pupils fail to develop ideas and produce work without sufficient research or planning. The achievement of most pupils in relation to their prior standards is good. The pupils who choose to study art at this level have a wide range of ability; a considerable number have a below average level of skills and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own work and the progressive structure of the course builds on their technical skills. This gives pupils the confidence to develop work in their own preferred style. Pupils in Year 10, particularly those with special educational needs, gain a good understanding of clay hand building techniques, when producing large innovative heads influenced by the style of specific artists. Schemes of work are well designed for the abilities of most pupils but the most able are not always

provided with the level of challenge in lessons that they need in order to maximise their potential in gaining the top grades of A* and A.

128. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall. In half the lessons seen it was good or very good, though one was unsatisfactory. In the best lessons teachers give very clear explanations, demonstrate techniques effectively and include a range of activities to interest and motivate pupils of all abilities. For example, in Year 7 the teacher involved and motivated pupils by cultivating a sense of discovery in the use of media and techniques when showing them how to make a relief tile. This gave them very strong direction on what they had to do and how to do it. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, there was a lack of pace and challenge because work was not planned to cater for different levels of attainment. This combined with the weak management of the pupils' behaviour resulted in a loss of interest and led to unsatisfactory learning. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is predominantly good. Teachers display a good knowledge of their subject and talk to the pupils about artists in an interesting and stimulating way. Most pupils respond well to the high level of individual support they are given and there is generally a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. Many pupils choose to carry on with work in the lunchtime and this further supports their learning. A minority find sustained concentration and independent learning difficult. These problems are more common in classes with a high number of pupils with SEN and no extra staff support. Where there is support, it is of a high quality and very effective. Literacy skills are well endorsed by keywords, and appropriate vocabulary is given on the student project sheets. Teachers positively encourage its use in discussion and in written work such as in the critical analysis of paintings. Projects are well planned but pupils do not always finish their final pieces before the new ones are started. The lack of consistency in adhering to deadlines does not help pupils to develop organisational skills and slows their rate of progress.

129. The department is well led and managed. Departmental plans and policy statements are clear and informative and give good direction to the teachers, who have a strong shared commitment to raising standards. Assessment structures are good. Criteria are given on project sheets so pupils know what is expected of them and they participate in their own evaluation of work and target setting. Information and communication technology (ICT) is built into projects and well used by pupils who have their own computers. However, the lack of computers in the department, or of access to them, limits what can be achieved, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Accommodation is adequate but it is in need of refurbishment. Furniture in one room is old and in poor repair and the floor has tiles missing which creates an uneven surface to walk on. Teachers create as stimulating environment as is possible in the circumstances. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Art and design has become more popular with the numbers in option groups rising. The head of department has raised the ethos of the subject by introducing more visits into the curriculum, exhibiting pupils' work in local venues and celebrating their successes in powerpoint presentations in achievement assemblies.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall, provision in business studies is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils make good progress because of good teaching, which emphasises their role as independent learners.
- The use of assessment data to inform pupils and parents ensures pupils know what they have to do to improve.
- The monitoring of schemes of work, which ensures that the curriculum is relevant to both learning needs and external accreditation requirements.

Areas for Improvement:

- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom to deepen knowledge and understanding of the subject are underdeveloped.
- Use of ICT to develop higher order investigative skills and understanding of the business environment could be extended.

130. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were in line with the national average and this reflected a similar situation to the previous year. There were no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls but overall, pupils performed better in business studies than in many other subjects at the age of 16.

131. Standards pupils attain by the end of Year 11 in the work seen are broadly average. These are reflected for current pupils in the assessment and value added data held by the department. These standards represent satisfactory achievement, both in relation to earlier work and the levels of attainment on entry to the course. Achievement for some pupils is restricted by poor attendance in both Years 10 and 11.

132. By the end of Year 11, pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding of business concepts. These include those relating to types of organisational structure and aspects of motivation and reward. Oral skills, for example in discussing the classification of businesses as primary, secondary and tertiary enterprises, are better than recording skills. They fully understand the business and legal implications of different types of concern, for example, 'sole trader' businesses and 'companies limited by guarantee'. Confidence to undertake extended writing, for example in work, on factors which can influence the location of business, is weaker. Pupils overall are less secure in applying their knowledge to situations where understanding how topics integrate with each other is important. Basic literacy skills, particularly in technical vocabulary remain a barrier to learning for some pupils. The Department is actively considering introducing specialist dictionaries tailored to the needs of such pupils. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to gain insight to the values of business enterprise, for example, in considering the merits of 'for profit' and 'not for profit' organisations and the ethics of business.

133. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress, which is limited by the fact that there is only modest in – class support for them.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are generally well planned and expectations are high. Lesson objectives are clear and are consistently shared with pupils. Better lessons include opportunities for pupils to reflect on the learning which has occurred, for example, in a lesson dealing with industrial trends in Year 10 where review of material covered consolidated pupils' learning. Questioning of pupils is inclusive with different girls being targeted to ensure that they become involved. Where teaching is good,

pupils are reminded of the necessity of taking responsibility for their own learning, for example, in a lesson dealing with types of business enterprise in Year 10. This is further enhanced by use of wall display where there are many examples of pupils' work in each of the specialist classrooms.

135. Teaching methods are good and make effective use of investigative approaches. The topics chosen, for example, industrial disputes in the transport sector, are contemporary and well chosen for their intrinsic links to course concepts such as wage and price inflation. This both motivates pupils and encourages their individual research in using a range of media that extends well beyond textbooks. Development of literacy skills is good. There are planned opportunities for pupils to develop speaking skills through making presentations. There is a good emphasis on key words and vocabulary for example 'franchise' and 'liability' in Year 10 and this addresses the literacy needs of pupils well. This is further reinforced by the regular production of mind maps and explanatory flow diagrams by pupils, many of which are displayed and reinforce both understanding and expectation well.

136. There are relatively few opportunities to learn outside the classroom and there is comparatively little use of ICT. This limits the pace of pupils' learning, particularly in Year 10. There are only infrequent visits to local employers, and links with the local business community are modest. The use of ICT is under - developed and pupils are not sufficiently challenged with improving higher order skills of analysing business data or undertaking modelling of related economic activities. In part this is due to present difficulties in accessing specialist ICT facilities during the school day.

137. The department is led and managed well. Induction arrangements are of good quality and are carefully managed. This has enabled a recently appointed member of staff to make good progress in whole class teaching. The monitoring and supervision of teaching is good. It has assisted in supporting good attitudes to the subject though some immature behaviour was observed during group work in a Year 10 class on industrial relations. Good quality assessment information is promptly and regularly communicated to both pupils and their parents. It shows clearly where progress is being made but departmental analyses have yet to produce strategies for improving the performance of particular groups of pupils.

138. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in refining schemes of work and analysing pupil performance. There has also been welcome progress in developing pupils as independent learners using projects and investigative work as a means of deepening knowledge and understanding. In order for standards to be raised further strategies now need to be established which broaden learning approaches, particularly for the highest and lowest attainers. Opportunities for pupils to gain experience of business beyond class – based activities should be increased and the use of ICT to encourage higher order data analysis skills should also be developed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including those with SEN because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement:

- The accommodation for teaching food technology is poor and in need of some refurbishment.
- There is a need to improve access to computers and the resources for teaching computer aided design and control.

139. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that standards are well above the national average. In year 2001 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average and above the average for the school. At the end of Year 11 pupils achieve the results expected for their prior attainment and across the whole school standards are rising.

140. The standards of work seen for 11 to 14 year olds are above average when compared with national averages. Pupils make good progress because of the way the work is planned. By the end of Year 9, pupils know why it is necessary to modify recipes and they are aware of production systems in the food industry. They relate the quality control systems to their own products, for example, in making a biscuit with edible casing. They learn to work methodically; for example, they design and use flow charts to plan their work. In resistant materials, they understand about materials, structures and mechanisms and apply their understanding of number to work out ratios when learning about gears. Their knowledge of design and the impact of technology on everyday life is good because teachers' planning includes relevant references. Pupils in all lessons have a good understanding of the materials with which they work and use large and small equipment safely and competently. They collaborate well and are supportive of each other's efforts. They persevere well to achieve good results and they are proud of what they make. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls. Pupils with SEN are well supported by individual attention from the teacher and the support from their peers, and make satisfactory progress.

141. By the end of Year 11 standards are above the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to evaluate and modify their work as it progresses. They work with good levels of accuracy to achieve good quality finished products. Pupils have sufficient confidence, knowledge and understanding to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs and specifications. Pupils work well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. Pupils have opportunities to use ICT, particularly to present their work but also when they are designing. Pupils' design work and practical work shows progression in development and a satisfactory level of craftsmanship in its execution. The higher achieving pupils critically analyse their work well. All pupils, regardless of ability or gender, achieve well because teachers have high expectations and provide a high level of support and encouragement. Pupils are introduced to the effects of technology on the design of products in lessons using resistant materials. Their understanding is sufficiently well developed because teachers emphasise this aspect through their teaching. Pupils have good levels of literacy and numeracy, which they apply to their work consistently. They are enthusiastic and work hard to succeed academically. Pupils are good independent

learners and use their initiative well to find and analyse information to inform their work. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used particularly well in all aspects of the subject.

142. Teaching overall is good and sometimes it is very good. In the best lessons, the learning is well structured and teachers use a good range of activities to ensure there is a brisk pace to the learning. New learning is regularly reinforced throughout lessons. Pupils are aware of the teachers' high expectations and the clear routines help to make them confident learners. Teachers make good use of ICT in lessons to encourage pupils to present their work well and to help them solve problems, for example those related to recipe adaptation or textiles investigations. The very best lessons are characterised by the quality of teachers' focus on the progress and needs of individual pupils. Very effective challenging, but supportive, relationships between the teacher and the pupils, coupled with on-going individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make very good progress.

143. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning. Key words are well reinforced in many lessons. Classes are competently managed and pupils are attentive, co-operative and eager to learn. Pupils make best progress in the lessons where activities are practical and challenging and they have opportunities to discuss their ideas with others.

144. There is sufficient on-going marking and assessment to ensure that all pupils make good progress. As a result, teachers have a wide understanding of pupils' individual needs to provide appropriately challenging tasks for the more able pupils or alternative ways for pupils with particular learning needs to understand.

145. The curriculum is broad and balanced and statutory requirements are met. The subject is very well managed and good systems are emerging for monitoring standards of teaching and learning. The high standards have been maintained and there have been clear improvements since the last inspection.

146. While some improvements have been made to the accommodation for resistant materials, it remains dated, drab and unattractive. The accommodation for teaching food technology is poor and in need of some refurbishment. The resources available for teaching the subject are satisfactory but there is a need to improve access to computers and the resources for teaching computer aided design. There is an annual health and safety review but risk assessments are not carried out. The level of technician support is adequate but assistance to support food technology is limited.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision for geography is very good.

Strengths:

- Standards are high.
- Teaching is good.
- Relationships are very good.
- The subject is well managed.
- Strategies to improve teaching are effective.

Areas for development:

- The use of National Curriculum Levels in the lower school to identify accurately the needs of the highest and lowest attainers.
- The quality and quantity of resources for learning.
- The quality of accommodation.

138. Attainment on entry to the school is generally above average. Whilst some pupils arrive with good knowledge of, for example, earthquakes and volcanoes, some have poor atlas skills and others do not know they have studied geography. The course in Year 7 skilfully establishes approved learning habits and equalises knowledge, skills and understanding.

139. By the age of 14, teachers' assessments show that attainment is well above the national average so that pupils make good progress over Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence confirms their judgement. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment, both boys and girls, make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. However, within a context of high attainment overall, girls attain better than boys. Some boys of average and below average prior attainment are coasting. Teachers do not properly identify the needs of the lowest and highest attaining pupils so that these groups could be stretched even further.

140. By the age of 14, pupils' achievement exceeds the national average. Pupils learn well how to use information to answer questions and to solve problems. For example, Year 9 pupils were starting work on less economically developed countries, using East Africa as a case study. They worked out for themselves the cycle that starts with drought and ends with the rural population eventually being too weak to produce their own food. This style of learning where pupils are encouraged to research gives good access to the higher levels of the National Curriculum.

141. In the GCSE results in 2001, attainment was significantly above the national average and pupils performed better than in other subjects in the school. Geography was taken by more pupils than any other option subject in 1999.

142. By the age of 16 pupils achieve above average standards in their lessons. In Year 10, pupils study migration using Sao Paulo in Brazil as a case study. They learn to isolate and identify both the negative factors that pushed people into migration and the positive factors, which pulled the same people to the towns. Thus they learn to link cause and effect and to use what they have learned to suggest solutions to problems. In Year 11 the issues-based curriculum continues to face pupils with moral questions. For example, pupils investigated why a pair of sports shoes costs £1.50 to make in Indonesia for a multi-national company and sells for £50 in Britain. The highest attaining pupils identified the economic issues of low standards of living and profit margins of large companies. Achievement is better in Year 10

than in Year 11 but all pupils make rapid progress through a course with a strong focus on examination success.

143. Teaching is good overall and is very good or excellent in one lesson in four. There is no difference between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The great strength of the teaching team is the strong subject knowledge of the three full-time teachers. Teachers use their knowledge well to explain and question, and to plan challenging activities, and this plays a significant part in helping pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching methods are challenging. For example, teachers use the stimulation of visual and sound recordings in interpreting the sound of African music or the astonishing rise of Japan as a major economic power since 1945.

144. Teachers know their pupils well and forge very good relationships of liking and trust which enable good teaching and learning. There is an occasional tendency for teachers to talk for too long. Humour is well used and laughter is frequently heard. Learning geography is fun.

145. All teaching proceeds at a fast pace. Expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high and are well met by the pupils. Open questions are well spread so that all are involved in their learning. Pupils are skilfully guided by good questioning to draw their own conclusions. Pupils have good listening skills and maintain their concentration well. They react well to the fast pace of learning, follow the lesson closely and participate willingly. They listen carefully and respectfully to the contributions of others. They are unafraid to be wrong as they speak their answers in confident extended sentences. For example, a boy with learning difficulties made a good oral contribution to his lesson and was carefully helped to write what he knew and understood on well-constructed work sheets. A Year 7 girl asked why the world map in her book was different from the one on the wall that the class were looking at and she coped well with the clear explanation about map projections.

146. Homework is set regularly and pupils are asked at the beginning of many lessons to read out what they have written for homework. The importance of homework is thus cleverly reinforced. At the same time knowledge and understanding is revised and the topic for the next lesson introduced. In Year 10 pupils make good suggestions to improve the accuracy of writing as they listen to each other's examination answers.

147. The teaching of basic skills varies. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through a wide range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. Numeracy skills are used daily but there is no plan to develop this further, for example by asking pupils to use higher level statistical methods to analyse their own statistics in examination coursework. Access to computers is difficult because there are insufficient in school but, when possible, the department co-operates well with the ICT co-ordinator to use computers, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where enquiry skills were being taught. Homework is frequently set using computers and web sites but the department is not sure who has a computer at home and who does not.

148. A well-constructed pattern of practical work and enquiry in Years 7 to 9 lays a good foundation for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Lively work on Barnard Castle, Holderness and Kenya was scrutinised during the inspection.

149. Teachers use their knowledge and experience of being examiners or examination markers very well to prepare pupils for GCSE examinations. All pupils following the GCSE course have an examination question per week for homework, which is marked and returned the same week. Their performance is closely scrutinised but marking does not always

explain how to improve. However, oral feedback to pupils is generally analytical and supportive.

150. Leadership of the department is good. However, the use of assessed work to guide effective target setting to raise attainment even further, particularly in the lower school, is underdeveloped. Teachers work closely together as very effective team and have produced some very effective changes to teaching in Years 7 to 9; these changes have not yet been introduced into Years 10 and 11. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory because there are insufficient modern atlases or up to date text books in the lower school. There are insufficient modern technological aids to teaching such as a digital projector or an interactive white board. Much of the furniture is in a poor condition and there are sometimes insufficient chairs. Blackout is poor in two of the three rooms. The carpets in one room are heavily patched. Display of pupils' work in two of the three rooms is good. However, the poor rooms are not helped by the generally untidy state of loose papers on the tops of filing cabinets and elsewhere.

HISTORY

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good.
- Development founded on accurate evaluation of previous performance.
- Results at GCSE are well above average and standards lower down the school are rising.
- Pupils respond positively to the teaching.

Areas for improvement:

- Although still well above average, results at the highest grades decreased in 2001 and boys did less well than previously.
- The use of ICT for research is underdeveloped.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

151. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average and, because teachers are concerned to involve everyone in what the subject has to offer, all pupils make at least good progress in acquiring historical skills. Pupils who find much of the work difficult and who cannot write at any great length are nonetheless challenged effectively by the teaching. They too become involved in historical debate and achieve more than would normally be expected. At the start of Year 7 teachers introduce pupils to how historians work, and in Year 8 they begin to write essays based on a range of different kinds of evidence. In Year 9 they take part in role-plays, which require them to judge the past on its own standards and values and decide just why historical figures acted the way they did. These skills are put to further use in Years 10 and 11, when pupils become more skilled at analysing source material and making judgements as to its reliability and usefulness to students of history. In all years pupils and students respond well to the subject, speak highly of their teachers and have good relationships with their classmates. They are delighted when their peers succeed.

152. At GCSE Level, results have been well above average for the past two years and all pupils entered for the examination have achieved a pass grade. However, the percentage of pupils attaining at A* and A has decreased and girls now outperform boys. Moreover, there are fewer pupils opting for the subject in Year 10.

153. However, teachers have recognised where improvements need to be made and staffing is now stable, so standards are beginning to rise again and more pupils in Year 9 are expressing an interest in studying history in Years 10 and 11. During the inspection, there were examples of exceptional performance in written assignments in Year 9. Pupils also display good skills in historical debate and by the age of 14 they can challenge their classmates to give information on how soldiers in the First World War trenches may have felt and why their officers made the military decisions which led to further slaughter. In the lower sets pupils do not interpret evidence to the same degree but, when challenged effectively, they can engage with each other to decide, for example, how far Charles I was responsible for the outbreak of civil war in the first half of the 17th Century. In Years 10 and 11, teachers continue to expect much from their pupils and they ask questions which demand a depth of thought on the nomadic life of the Plains Indians and also on the hardships facing early settlers.

154. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and in two-thirds of lessons it is very good or excellent. The high quality of teaching is the major strength of the department and is characterised by an understanding of the many different ways in which humans think and learn. Teachers use a wide range of methods to meet their pupils' learning needs and, because they wish to include everyone in what the study of history has to offer, they place emphasis on collaborative work. Pupils challenge each other's views and also learn from each other's contributions. Challenge is ever present, questioning is relentless, and pupils respond positively to the high expectations their teachers have of them. Furthermore, teachers have secure classroom management, treat their pupils with dignity, care deeply for their welfare, and work hard to ensure that everyone can achieve some form of personal success. They display a good balance between telling the story of history and allowing for the acquisition of skills.

155. Teachers use the language of history naturally and extensively and as a result pupils are very articulate and express their views with accurate terminology lower down the school. As one boy in Year 9 said, 'It was a war of attrition, Miss.' And as another pupil asked later in the lesson, 'Did he die a noble death?' Numeracy is also a strong feature and pupils are given opportunities to complete time lines and graphs. A key feature of the teaching, and one which leads to high levels of objectivity throughout the history curriculum, is the use of simulation activities, very often written by the teachers themselves. The detective story in Year 7, the trench warfare game in Year 9, and the early settlers' role-play in Year 10 all serve to encourage pupils to consider exactly how people in the past might think, and why they made the decisions they did. The sequencing exercises on the Black Death also give pupils opportunities to investigate their own thought patterns and the ways in which they prefer to learn. When this is shared with others in the class, it leads pupils to experiment with new approaches to the assignment. Teachers mark work in depth and give pupils detailed comments on how they may improve. Teachers are now looking at ways of ensuring a greater consistency of marking across the department and are also considering how they may make better use of ICT as a tool for pupils' research.

156. The department is very well led and managed and teachers have identified very accurately elements of performance, which are in need of improvement. The scheme of work is a well-written document with learning objectives and the achievement of pupils at its very core. Pupils benefit from a variety of visits and fieldwork activities and the Holocaust display in the main classroom is a strong feature in the department's very good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of its pupils. The department has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and in the effectiveness of management. Teachers in the department co-operate well, have the needs

of their pupils always in mind and share a common vision for the teaching of history. The department is, therefore, well placed for future development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, provision in ICT is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good and help them to learn effectively.
- Pupils make good progress.
- Leadership is good and impacts well on standards.

Areas for Improvement:

- The number of modern computers, which is well below national recommendations.
- Monitoring of the curriculum and how ICT supports learning within some subjects in Years 7 to 9.
- The standards that pupils achieve at the end of Year 11.

157. There were no teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2001 since ICT was not taught as a separate subject. This remains the case for current pupils, but examination of school records indicate that boys and girls are now making good progress. Knowledge and skills are developing well. This would be consistent with previous patterns of attainment in this subject at the end of Year 9 in 1999 and 2000. GCSE results declined in 2001 and are well below the national average. This reflected difficulties in staffing in this subject area which have now been resolved with the appointment of two well qualified specialists.

158. Pupils make good progress. In Year 7 pupils consolidate and extend their vocabulary, for example, using the terms 'relative' and 'absolute' in understanding cell addresses. Pupils can recognise and describe the components of computer hardware accurately and well. They make good progress in acquiring basic programming competences through the use of Logo software. By the end of Year 8 middle and higher attaining pupils have the ability to copy, paste, import and export data with increasing confidence. Similarly, they undertake more complex editing and extended writing tasks to a standard above the national average. Pupils of all abilities show an interest and enthusiasm in their work which is in part a product of clearly chosen topics for study and teaching which emphasise the practical aspects of coursework, for example in traffic control studies in Years 10 and 11.

159. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Teaching takes into account the needs of all pupils and makes very good provision for pupils with SEN, who follow the same curriculum as their peers but with the support of Sixth Form students. This approach is effective and leads to high self-esteem among all pupils.

160. By Year 8, pupils are being well challenged by tasks which include web page design and more advanced desktop publishing which they can apply to other subject areas such as topographical work on Kenya in geography. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace with tight time challenges for the completion of tasks. There is good provision of work for gifted and talented pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with well considered extension exercises, for example in programming work. Relationships are very good and lessons are executed with an appropriate balance of purpose and humour. Pupils rightly report positively on their learning experiences in lessons. Systems to track and record pupil progress are not fully in place and the department is aware of this.

161. Management of the subject is satisfactory. A new head of department has been recently appointed and is having a positive impact and provides strong leadership to staff inside and outside the department. There is an embryonic development plan which addresses issues such as the induction of new staff. Day-to-day assessment arrangements where ICT is taught separately have improved. Lesson planning has also developed well and this has increased the pace of learning for pupils of all abilities. A coherent vision for the subject has yet to be established which will set out the practicalities of how standards are to be raised, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the existing development plan does not provide a way forward for other subjects to increase access to specialist facilities. The motivation of pupils has also been raised by the enthusiastic teaching which is now provided. All Year 10 and 11 pupils now have an assured entitlement to ICT within their study and the quality and range of activities undertaken by pupils in Years 7 to 9 have been improved as a result of an audit to identify the range of provision. Opportunities to learn about the subject outside the classroom have also been enhanced, for example, by means of a trip to Disneyland Paris to examine the computer control and use of new technology in the leisure industry.

162. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory and a number of key issues have not been addressed. GCSE results have declined significantly. The development plan is not detailed enough and in particular, there is no clear view as to how pupil entitlement to the National Curriculum, especially in Year 9, is to be ensured and effectively monitored. Record keeping and the monitoring of pupil progress generally are inadequate.

163. Although the quality of computer hardware has improved, access to it has not. The school has worked diligently to acquire extra resources and this remains a high priority within the main school development plan. Additional money is shortly to be spent but will not add to specialist ICT accommodation. The ratio of computers to pupils is now well below the national expectation and even some of the more modern equipment, whilst portable, has limited power for current software applications. The present pressures on specialist ICT facilities mean that many departments have very limited use of computing equipment, though the department tries hard to ensure equity.

164. The appointment of specialist staff and a commitment to further enhance resources means that the department has the capacity to improve.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths:

- The majority of pupils make good progress.
- The opportunity for pupils to enhance their language skills through the use of ICT.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards in German.

165. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that just over half of the pupils performed at or above national expectations. Changes to the levels of attainment in modern foreign languages make comparison with previous years unreliable. At GCSE pupils' level of attainment in French at grades A* to C in 2001 was in line with national averages. This represents an improvement over the last three years. Girls performed better than boys, but

both were almost exactly in line with national averages in 2001, when all pupils gained a pass grade. Results in German have shown a decline over the same

period, and are well below average for grades A* to C, bearing in mind that national averages are at least ten per cent higher than in French. Staffing difficulties, and a long-term absence, have caused disruption to the continuity of teaching and the preparation of candidates.

166. Inspection evidence shows that higher attaining pupils in Year 7 make good progress in all four skills, and particularly in speaking. They assimilate and retain language patterns well, and can write with a high degree of accuracy. Lower- and middle-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also progressing well, despite initial difficulties with spelling, gender and adjective agreement. By the end of Year 9 higher-attaining pupils are achieving above expectations in French, especially in the accuracy of their writing. They manipulate tenses and other grammatical constructions very well, but would benefit from more opportunities to submit extended work. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils are achieving in accordance with their capabilities in speaking, listening and reading, but are more restricted in the range and quality of their language in writing. Standards in French are in line with expectations. The groups of higher attainers who have the opportunity to study German from Year 8 are achieving well, a high proportion having reached national expectations after less than two years.

167. In Years 10 and 11 there is evidence of outstanding work among higher-attaining pupils. Initial confusion with new topics and grammar is soon overcome, which results in products of impressive accuracy. Their written coursework in both languages shows a high level of fluency and a confident use of tenses and complex constructions. Many middle-attainers show rapid progress in handling more complex material, but this is sometimes at the expense of remembering and applying more elementary knowledge. Communication is occasionally hindered by inaccuracies, but some pupils could perform well in higher-level papers. The written coursework of lower-attaining pupils suffers from restricted content, as well as rather repetitive sentence construction and language. However, in general, they perform well at a simpler level, produce some imaginative work through ICT, and may benefit from more opportunities to put together longer pieces of work. Standards towards the end of Year 11 are average in French, and are showing improvement in German.

168. Since the last inspection the department has not suffered from adverse timetabling, but pupils studying a second language in Years 8 and 9 still have reduced time for physical education. This, along with the role of the second language, is under review. Opportunities for pupils to study two languages to GCSE are less restricted, and numbers have recently increased. The accommodation, assessment and reporting issues have been resolved, although some rooms can be cramped with groups of over thirty. All pupils have individual access to textbooks, and all groups, apart from two, have regular timetabled access to the language laboratory. The raising of teachers' expectations, the wide range of teaching methods, and the equal emphasis given to all four skills have addressed the teaching and learning issues raised. Although teachers encounter challenging behaviour from a minority of pupils, the atmosphere in lessons is positive; pupils contribute willingly to classroom exchanges, and work responsibly and with interest individually, and in pair- or group-work.

169. Teaching is good overall. Seventy per cent was good or better, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. All teachers have a profound knowledge of the language and a high standard of fluency. There is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of language patterns and awareness of grammar to provide a firm basis for accurate communication. This teaching of basic literacy skills often requires use of English, which can detract the use of the foreign language in the classroom, but was never less than effective. Teaching has its strongest impact when teachers know the needs of their pupils well, set an appropriate pace at the start of the lesson, and have high expectations of their performance and behaviour. In a Year 9 German group, of higher attaining pupils, the teacher introduced new items of vocabulary on the topic of places to visit, with a view to introducing adjectives to describe

them. The pupils practised the new items through quizzes and games, which enhanced and maintained their interest and motivation. The truly challenging work was the introduction of adjectives to add extra quality to the language, to realise that German adjectives have endings depending on the function of the noun, and to remember what the different endings are. At least half of the pupils were able to assimilate the pattern comfortably in an initial encounter with what is the most difficult aspect of German grammar. Teachers lay great emphasis on making pupils aware of how to increase the quality of their spoken and written language to gain higher marks, and much time is spent in Year 11 on improving examination techniques. In a Year 11 lower-attaining French set, for instance, the teacher was concentrating on ensuring that all pupils understood the prompts for the foundation level role-play exercises.

170. The best lessons are well planned, recall prior knowledge, include a variety of timed extension activities, covering different skills and using varied media such as overhead projection and video. Teachers take care to involve as many pupils as possible in class exchanges, and most pupils are eager to participate, and work well together. In a Year 7 lesson, centring on preferences in sport, the teacher used a variety of phrases to express likes and dislikes, and spoke directly to all pupils, correcting their pronunciation sympathetically, giving plenty of praise and encouragement. Pupils practised and reinforced the material through exercises mostly involving listening and speaking, as well as taking responsibility for talking to each other in pair-work. In this way they were able to build vocabulary and sentence construction in readiness for extension into reading and writing.

171. On some occasions the impact of the lesson is lost when pupils need to be recalled constantly to attention. Teachers generally handle challenging behaviour sufficiently well to ensure that the objectives of the lesson are achieved, and the learning of other pupils is not compromised. A few less well-motivated pupils take advantage of the smallness of the language laboratory to disrupt lessons. When all pupils are seated, the far corners are difficult to access and supervise. The teacher can monitor from the central console, but cannot always ensure directly that the furthest pupils are working at the appropriate pace, and achieving effective learning.

172. Homework is appropriate and is used to consolidate work done in class or to prepare for a subsequent lesson. Marking is frequent and thorough, and constructive feedback is given where appropriate.

173. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, and some pupils have the opportunity to experience a second foreign language. The recent provision of a language laboratory linked to computers has provided a regular opportunity for most pupils to enhance their language skills through ICT. This facility is also available for individual use at lunchtimes. The department offers trips to France and Germany, and has started a pen-friend link in Year 8 with a French school.

174. Teachers have accurate records of pupils' progress and attainment and are exploiting them efficiently in target setting. Pupils are aware of their attainment levels in major assessments, and have responsibility for recording their own progress as they work through the units of learning. Teachers are involved with each pupil, as they comment on the pupil's assessment and agree targets. Lesson planning and suggestions in the schemes of work inform adaptation of materials to the differing needs of students, both from the courses and drawn up by the teachers themselves.

175. The department has experienced staffing difficulties since the last inspection, and suffered from disruption through long-term illness. The head of department, now in his second year, gives strong leadership and clear educational direction, and is well supported

by a team committed to sharing best practice. The schemes of work have been revised, and targets for the raising of standards in German have already been set. Clear spending priorities have been established to make the best of limited resources. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching occur regularly and formally at both departmental and senior management level, but not frequently enough by other modern languages teachers to ensure that good practice is effectively shared.

MUSIC AND DRAMA

The quality of provision for music is very good.

Strengths:

- The profile of music has been raised, particularly during the past year.
- Standards of attainment have been raised.
- The department provides an attractive range of different courses across the age range.

Areas for improvement:

- Information and communication technology and appropriate resources for the use of technology.
- The accommodation because there is limited practice room space available for group activities.

176. The most recent teachers' assessments showed standards of attainment to be below the national average at the end of Year 9. The two specialist teachers in the department joined the school staff when this cohort of pupils entered Year 9. They worked hard to raise standards during that year, and are continuing to do so at the present time across Years 7 to 9. In the most recent GCSE expressive arts examination, pupils attained standards below the national average. Again, the two members of staff took over this group of pupils half way through their course, and had to do much to raise the low standards pupils had achieved in Year 10. In the same year the teachers prepared a small group of pupils for the GCSE music examination out of school hours. In one year this group gained results significantly higher than the national average.

177. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 9, the standards of most pupils are above the national average. As most pupils enter the school with standards below the national average, the good, and often very good, progress made in Years 7 to 9, together with the very good quality of teaching in the department, combine to produce these good standards. Pupils systematically acquire knowledge of musical literacy, and are introduced to aspects of harmony and musical repertoire, enabling them to compose, appraise and perform with authority by the end of Year 9. They successfully use a range of major and minor chords when composing, and understand how to write rounds and use ostinati. Even by Year 8 they are able to apply retrograde and inverted melodies when composing in variation form. Good standards of attainment were observed in two Year 9 lessons in which a whole-class improvisation was created, using Michael Nyman's 'Time Lapse' as a model. Pupils played confidently in six parts, using major, minor and diminished chords. They fully understood how a ground bass works. They used passing and auxiliary notes, and demonstrated considerable variety in order to create an attractive composition. Pupils of all

ability were fully involved in this performance. Talented pupils were given challenging tasks to undertake which involved advanced improvisation techniques. Pupils having special needs are integrated well into ensemble work, as they are given tasks appropriate to their abilities, and take as active a part as the other pupils.

178. Pupils in Year 10 have widely varying standards of practical ability, ranging from drummers who have fine drumming skills, but who have difficulty reading music, to pupils who are very competent pianists and woodwind players. The overall standard of attainment in that year is satisfactory. Pupils know how to use major, minor, blues and pentatonic scales, and one talented boy knows how whole-tone scales are used. Most pupils can improvise with success. Some have difficulty repeating echo-clapping phrases containing syncopated notes. Co-ordination skills are not always successful in ensemble work. No lessons were observed in Year 11, which is taught out of school hours.

179. Pupils make good progress within lessons, and some make very good progress; all make at least good progress across Years 7 to 9. The carefully structured development of lessons enables pupils to progress, often towards successful group or whole-class ensemble performances at the end of lessons. Open-ended tasks enable pupils of all abilities to be extended. One Year 9 pupil having special needs, for example, performed an impressive improvised melody on the piano, with the teacher adding a ground bass, toward the end of one lesson. The teachers' insistence upon headphones being used with the music technology aids pupils' progress. The limited availability of keyboards, necessitating sharing, restricts the progress made. Most Year 10 pupils start their course from a low level of practical performance, but make good progress in developing their musical skills and knowledge.

180. The quality of teaching is very good, and this is central to the good progress of pupils. Lessons are extremely well planned, and are supported with informative, progressive worksheets which have been carefully constructed by the members of staff. New skills and concepts are clearly explained, with relevant, well-performed musical examples being demonstrated on the piano or keyboard. Much thought is given to producing original material for lessons; the combination of 'Joshua fought the battle of Jericho' with a D minor scale, for example, was unusual and a very effective way of ensuring confident two-part singing. Lessons are delivered at a fast pace, are always challenging, and contain varied related activities, which maintain the interest of pupils.

181. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, with some notable successes. Schemes of work have been completely reviewed and contain modules which are most attractive and raise the interest of all pupils. The needs of talented pupils, and those having special needs, are now addressed through specific tasks in practical work. The use of ICT is still under-developed, due largely to a lack of appropriate resources. This applies particularly to the work in Years 7 to 9. Although the department has two appropriately sized main teaching rooms, the accommodation is still inadequate as there is only one adjacent practice room which can be used for group work. There are some large classes, making the delivery of a practical subject very difficult to manage and organise, though teachers deal well with these large groups.

182. The music department is extremely well managed by the head of department. She and the second in department were both appointed about 18 months ago. Both have made a considerable impact upon the provision of music within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. They have improved standards all round and have introduced a range of attractive new courses. They are attracting boys quite significantly to examination courses. Together, they have raised the whole profile of music in the school.

183. The overall provision for drama is very good. It is delivered through performing arts modules in Years 7 to 9, as a separate subject in Year 10, through a GCSE drama course in Year 11 and through a theatre studies course in Year 12. No drama lessons were observed during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, standards of attainment are good. They are satisfactory in Year 12. The specialist teaching is very good at all levels. Teachers have a secure knowledge of specialist methodology, and they deliver challenging, exciting lessons, which appeal to the pupils, and inspire them to give of their best. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have very good attitudes to their work, and this, together with very good teaching, ensures that they make very good progress. By the end of Year 11, pupils project their voices very clearly when presenting their improvisations. They have well developed awareness of a range of issues, and confidently present quite lengthy scenarios, using many varied dramatic conventions. Year 12 students have a good knowledge of leading exponents of Twentieth Century theatre: they fully understand, for example, the innovative work of Stanislavski. Their practical skills are satisfactory. Delivery of drama in the school is inhibited by there being no specialist studio or appropriate resources.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the provision for physical education is good.

Strengths:

- Leadership of the department.
- Teachers' subject knowledge.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils' interest and attitude towards physical education.

Areas for improvement:

- More use of National Curriculum Levels for assessment in lessons.
- Ensure that all classes get good or better teaching by sharing good practice.
- Equal opportunity for pupils in Year 9 physical education.
- The accommodation for physical education.

184. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in physical education at age 14 in 2001 indicate that pupils are achieving above the levels expected for their age. GCSE results of pupils aged 16 in 2001 are above the national average. Standards have been maintained over recent years.

185. By the time pupils are 14 standards are broadly average, but with some pupils showing higher levels of performance in some activities. In dance in Year 7 pupils show good range of movement in the theme of parachute training, with jumping, free fall and marching to music. In hockey, in the same year, pupils have satisfactory levels of passing and receiving, although few are able to use reverse stick in dribbling. Pupils in Year 8 gymnastics show a good range of movement, with higher attaining girls able to perform forward and backward walkovers and cartwheels. However, boys in this group are working below the levels expected for their age. In Year 9 table tennis pupils have a range of shots with forehand and backhand with some use of spin. They are able to play short rallies and understand doubles scoring and service rotation. The standards of basketball in the Year 9 class, which has only one lesson per week, are below levels expected for their age, with poor shooting, passing and dribbling skills.

186. By the time pupils are 16, standards are in line with expectations. Year 10 GCSE volleyball pupils can use a volley pass and understand basic starting positions in the game. However, for a GCSE practical, standards are low, although they have just started the course. In GCSE theory students have a good knowledge of different aspects of aerobic and anaerobic training and threshold levels. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are at expected levels in trampolining, table tennis and soccer. In Year 10 girls' soccer standards are improving; many pupils are new to the game. In Year 11 basketball there is a good standard of play. Two very high attaining pupils have advanced skills, and the majority of pupils have good passing and receiving skills and knowledge of tactics and positional play. In GCSE theory in Year 11 pupils understand the effects of training and can create basic training programmes for a variety of sports. Students are completing individual studies and make very good use of ICT to enhance the quality of their work. Higher attaining pupils show good depth of knowledge and good understanding of evaluation and have very well organised files. Some lower attaining students, however, have less work in their files, poor organisation and missing work.

187. Pupils of all attainment levels make sound progress as they learn new skills, improve and refine existing ones, and increase their knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the progress is good or better in a lesson or over a unit of work. In Year 7 dance pupils build on skills learned in previous weeks to create a whole sequence of events centred on a parachute regiment in training. There is very good progress in Year 7 rugby where pupils are able to play 'tag' rugby successfully after only two lessons. In a Year 9 table tennis lesson pupils made good progress in developing their service technique. Where less progress is made lesson planning is not well done, with insufficient practice time on basic skills, and pupils do not respond well to teachers' instructions. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and is good in GCSE classes.

188. Teaching is satisfactory. Some lessons are very good or better. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them learn new skills and improve existing ones. Lessons are usually well planned, with well selected and appropriate practices, for pupils of all attainment levels. In good lessons objectives are shared with pupils at the start, which helps pupils focus on what they might be expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Classes are usually well managed, and pupils well behaved, and there are generally good relationships. Teachers make good use of question and answer sessions, which helps pupils share ideas and learn effectively in both classroom based lessons as well as in practical ones. In an excellent dance lesson, pupils took charge of their own warm up and the lesson was well paced, as there was sufficient challenge for all pupils. In GCSE theory lessons there is very good preparation, with good quality information sheets and work tasks. Pupils are given plenty of revision tasks to reinforce their learning of work done earlier in the course. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, in a small minority of lessons, the poor behaviour of a few pupils prevents others learning.

189. There is very good leadership and management of the department with a shared vision to provide good experiences in physical education for all pupils. There are opportunities for higher attaining pupils to play for school teams. There are high standards in soccer, rugby, netball, cross-country, athletics and table tennis. In the latter the school recently won the local schools' league. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Schemes of work are more detailed, although National Curriculum Levels are not used sufficiently to plan teaching. The accommodation for the subject continues to be unsatisfactory. The limited opportunities for the school to use the nearby sports centre continues to frustrate the department, and denies pupils access to good sports facilities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- The head of department and school senior management are committed to improving provision for religious education.
- Teachers are very well qualified in religious studies.

Areas for development:

- Standards and achievement of pupils.
- Teaching over time is unsatisfactory.
- The interest and effort of boys.
- Leadership and management.
- Accommodation.

190. Standards are below average. Standards are not as good as might be expected because teaching over time is unsatisfactory, boys have negative attitudes towards the subject, the accommodation for teaching religious studies is poor, and class sizes in Years 10 and 11 are too big. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are unsatisfactory.

191. In 2001 GCSE results in the short course were well below the national average for all pupils and just below the national average for girls. Girls did significantly better than boys in achieving A* to C grades. These results are typical of the previous two years. Pupils performed better in their other subjects than they did in religious studies. At the time of the previous inspection pupils were not entered for GCSE examinations in Religious Studies/Education.

192. By the end of Year 9 attainment is below average. Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, have some knowledge and understanding of the important features of at least three major world religions, but only at a very basic level. From their study of Judaism they are aware of the importance of the synagogue and the Torah. They have some knowledge of the lives of religious founders such as Abraham, Guru Nanak, Muhammad and Gotama Buddha. Year 7 pupils understand the importance of signs and symbols in different religions. Higher attaining pupils occasionally produce work of above average standard. For example, in one Year 7 class a group of higher attaining pupils, asked to design a building to house one main worship room, designed a building with a number of relevant and interesting features including six exterior doors for the six main world religions and a circular window to represent eternity. However, the vast majority of pupils fail to understand what religions have in common and how and why they differ. Given their attainment on entry achievement over time is unsatisfactory.

193. By the end of Year 11 standards overall are still below average. Pupils' understanding and knowledge of the key features and beliefs of the major world religions studied, including Christianity, are below average. They have below average skills in researching and discussing contemporary moral issues. They are unable to write at length on moral issues such as abortion, racism and genetic engineering, recognising strengths and weaknesses in both sides of the argument and sometimes sharing an understanding of religious perspectives upon these issues. Few pupils can use the correct terminology to describe the key beliefs and teachings of the religions studied or to make connections between them. Only a small minority of higher attaining girls are able to make links

between the values and commitments inherent in different religions and their own attitudes and behaviour. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 11, when measured against their attainment at the end of Year 9, are unsatisfactory, particularly for boys, whose negative attitudes towards the subject hold back their progress.

194. The teaching of religious education is unsatisfactory. A great deal of work is unmarked, partly, but not wholly, because of recent staffing difficulties, and assessment grades have not been recorded. Consequently, pupils do not know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They make insufficient gains in either knowledge or understanding of the principle elements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Of lessons seen during the inspection, one in six was unsatisfactory, one in six was good or better and the remainder were satisfactory. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject that enables them to answer pupils' questions and help them gain a better understanding of what is being taught. Despite the negative attitudes of boys, relationships with pupils are generally good and pupils are managed effectively so that little time is wasted. Where teaching is unsatisfactory teachers spend too much time talking at pupils rather than actively involving them in the learning process. Pupils, and particularly boys, find this style of teaching dull and unimaginative and switch off, so that little learning takes place in these lessons. Although many groups are of mixed ability, no account is taken of the different needs of different groups and they are all taught as one group. This was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils with SEN make unsatisfactory progress. Insufficient use is made of computers to support learning, for example, in the use of the Internet for research. Where teaching is very good, as in one lesson with a group of Year 10 lower attaining pupils, teaching is challenging and imaginative and pupils are involved in a number of activities. In this lesson pupils were involved in group discussions, personal reflections and evaluation of visual materials. By the end of the lesson pupils had begun to understand how Nazism used Darwin's theory of evolution to raise the Aryan race to a higher status than the human race.

195. The accommodation is poor. Approximately half of all lessons are taught in a large corridor area and there are frequent interruptions from pupils, staff and visitors. This distracts pupils so that their concentration lapses and learning suffers. For example, during one lesson a pupil passing through on an errand took a girl's coat off her chair and ran off with it. Little learning took place until the coat had been retrieved. Some classes are too big (for example a class of 36 in Year 10 and one of 34 in Year 11), which restricts teaching styles and inhibits teachers from giving pupils individual attention.

196. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Not enough is being done to tackle the underachievement of pupils and their below-average standards. Pupils' progress is not monitored and their work is not marked or recorded frequently enough. There are no formal records of the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of assistant teachers within the department. The scheme of work for the revised locally Agreed Syllabus is not yet in place. There are no policies to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development or how the subject can support the school's literacy and numeracy initiatives. Consequently the department's support for these initiatives is unsatisfactory. The head of department is aware of the current difficulties and shortcomings within the department and is beginning to develop procedures and strategies to tackle them, for example in the very good assessment procedures recently introduced for Year 7 pupils. There is a developing programme of visits to mosques and temples. The staffing difficulties experienced recently have, for the moment, been resolved and there is a willingness and determination to succeed, both at head of department and senior management level. The organisation of Year 10 and 11 classes according to performance in mathematics makes planning work to match the needs of pupils particularly difficult.

197. The time given to religious education in Year 11 has improved since the time of the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

GNVQ foundation course in travel and tourism.

Overall, the quality of provision in the vocational course is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- The course addresses the specific needs of some pupils.
- The improved commitment to school of pupils on the course.

Areas for development:

- Suitable challenge of work to stretch all pupils.
- Management of pupils' behaviour.

198. This course is provided for pupils of low prior attainment accompanied by some underdeveloped social skills and challenging behaviour. These pupils might otherwise become discouraged and disaffected and not attend school. Pupils are correctly disapplied from attending modern foreign languages lessons. The course is in Year 11 only. The Year 10 option pattern shows that there were 13 pupils who opted for the course but it did not run.

199. The course has a satisfactory level of success in that two thirds of the candidates achieved a full GNVQ Foundation qualification. The course meets its social purposes in that it offers pupils time and space to mature in a supportive atmosphere where they can attain at an appropriate level. All pupils have apparently suitable and clear ideas about where they want to go to the next level of education or training.

200. Achievement in class matches the requirements of the course. Pupils have a good knowledge of types of holiday and can locate examples of theme parks and holiday resorts on a map of the British Isles. The level of practical exercise was appropriate for most of the pupils but was too easy for one attention-seeking boy. Cutting and pasting did not engage the interest of three others for very long. Consequently the group came to disrupt the lesson with loud comments so that the others did not receive the support they needed to move on after completing their work.

201. The course is well organised and teaching is satisfactory. The teacher is patient and for the most part plans work well. However, difficult behaviour of one or two pupils causes problems in class management and occasionally tasks do not fully engage or challenge pupils.

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

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

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

GCE AS Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
German	2	0	82	0	13	0	1.85
Mathematics	2	50	62	0	15	0.5	1.5

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	5	100	96	40	46	6.4	6.6
Biology	6	100	88	17	34	4.3	5.3
Chemistry	7	86	90	29	43	4.6	5.9
Theatre studies	4	100	93	50	31	7.5	5.5
Business studies	9	89	89	22	36	5.3	5.5
English language	9	100	91	11	30	4.9	5.3
English literature	5	100	95	40	37	6.4	5.9
French	4	75	89	25	38	5.0	5.6
Design and technology	10	90	91	80	30	7.2	5.4
General studies	39	74	85	18	30	3.7	4.9
Geography	24	88	92	21	38	4.7	5.7
German	4	100	91	0	40	4.5	5.8
History	12	92	88	25	35	4.5	5.5
Mathematics	9	67	87	22	43	3.6	5.8
Physics	6	67	88	17	40	3.0	5.7
Physical education	6	100	92	17	25	5.0	5.1

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

204. The focus was on mathematics and biology but further mathematics, physics and chemistry were also sampled. Teaching of the further mathematics course is very good and students learn very well. Students demonstrate high levels of mathematical understanding and rigour in their work. One lesson in each of physics and chemistry was seen and, in both, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Numbers taking the Advanced Level examinations in physics and chemistry in recent years have been small. Attainment in chemistry is below average and well below average in physics as measured by examination results averaged over recent years.

Mathematics

The quality of provision for mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- Standards of students' attainment in Years 12 and 13 are above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Very good relationships enhance students' learning.

Areas for Improvement:

- Development of teaching methods to enrich mathematics and increase the use of computers in A Level courses.
- Development of more independent learning by students.

205. Students' attainment in the 2001 A Level examinations was well below average. This halts the significant trend of improvement evident since the last inspection. Considering the higher attainment evident in the current Years 12 and 13, the 2001 results are a dip in a continuing trend of improvement. In the Year 12 AS results of 2001 three-quarters of students attained a pass grade. The poor attitudes to learning of some students during that year, and the long-term absence of two key members of the teaching team, are contributory factors to the momentary fall in standards. Most successful AS students continued on to the A Level course. At both A and AS Levels, able students achieve very well. There is no evidence of differences in the achievements of different groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

206. The standard of A Level and AS work is well above average. Achievement is very good. Year 13 students are learning well and are progressing through their course at a challenging pace. Their files show ability to use methods of differentiation, curve sketching, significance testing using the normal distribution and other elements of their programmes of study. The most competent students show very good understanding and provide fluent mathematical solutions which are rigorous in mathematical presentation. In a Year 13 lesson, students studying moments showed good understanding of the background concepts and were able to develop clear diagrams and resolve given forces from a given theoretical situation. Year 12 students are very competent, learning very well and attaining very high standards. Their files show detailed coverage of topics for their AS modules; these include laws of motion, the forces in pulleys, differentiation and integration methods, which demonstrate very good progress through programmes of study.

207. Students' work indicates very good attitudes to the subject and the development of excellent mathematical practices. The most competent students' work indicates very good understanding, with rapid accurate solutions. During a Year 12 lesson introducing moments students displayed very good independent thinking. Students' questions challenged the teacher to explain the effects on units and they asked if applying the moment of the resultant of all forces, rather than individual forces, would have the same effect. Independent thinking was more frequent in Year 12 than in Year 13, in which students placed their trust in the teachers' skills to lead them through the course. The very good relationships which exist in teaching groups provide a supportive environment in which students learn very well. All groups of students are equally involved in lessons and make very good progress.

208. The teaching of mathematics to Sixth Form students is very good. The high quality of teachers' subject knowledge ensures clear development of mathematical concepts and processes, enabling students to understand the nature of the problems they solve. Lessons are well planned to deliver a sequence of topics, which build on students' previous knowledge and conceptual understanding. Very good student-teacher relationships within the classroom provide a trusting learning environment in which students feel comfortable seeking help, challenging concepts or offering alternate hypotheses for solutions. The predominant teaching style experienced by students is that of teacher-led lessons, which do offer opportunity for debate and investigation. However, little use is made of computers as learning tools due to limitations of access and resources in this area. Students are well supported by the detailed and rigorous marking of their work, which gives them a clear understanding of their progress against their target grade. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, which produces interesting and challenging lessons for students.

209. Management and leadership in the department are very good. Well-qualified and skilled teachers teach the Sixth Form. Students are well supported in their studies by the organisation of courses, which allows an option of study units in Year 13 and the possibility to study AS further mathematics. The careful management of the budget has ensured that all students now have a suitable course book for their studies. There is an ethos within the department of love of mathematics which conveys itself to the students, enriching their learning. There are no planned contributions to key skills of students beyond those required by the subject. Development since the last inspection is good. Resources have improved and the provision of suitable course texts has enhanced students' facilities for learning. The new AS course has been introduced and examination modules have been chosen to offer best opportunities for success. Attainment at A Level has improved. The department must strive to develop ICT as a learning and teaching tool to enhance students' experience of mathematics, and further develop teaching styles that encourage more independent thought in students.

Biology

Overall the provision for biology is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Students work well together and enjoy good relationships with their teachers.

Areas for improvement:

- Facilities for the use of ICT for teaching and learning.
- More detailed development of schemes of work to build on the range of learning opportunities.

210. Standards reached in the 2001 A Level examinations were close to the national average, although the number of students involved is small. In recent years there has been significant variation in standards and numbers have been too variable to identify any definite trend. Averaged over the last four years, the number reaching the higher grades of A and B was just above the national average, and almost all students taking the final examination achieved at least grade E. However, in the last two years not all students who started the course in Year 12 completed it and the numbers taking the A Level examinations were significantly smaller than they had been in the two previous years.

211. Attainment of students currently in school is above average, as measured by performance in the AS examinations taken in 2001 and by the standard of work seen in lessons. The majority of students in Year 12 in 2001 continued to the second year of the course and the majority of students currently in Year 12 express an intention at this stage to continue next year.

212. Students in Year 13 show an above average grasp of the complex language of biology and have acquired a good understanding of basic principles throughout the course. For example, in a lesson on genetic engineering most were able to take a full part in a discussion on the differences between embryo and nuclear transfer cloning. In a lesson on crossbreeding in plants most students can set up a Punnett square and calculate genetic ratios. Pupils with low attainment find this more difficult but can proceed when given support. Significance testing using the chi-squared test is well known by students, although some were not sure how to test the outcome from the calculated figure.

213. The work of students in Year 12 shows that most are successfully bridging the gap between GCSE and Sixth Form studies. They show good retention of the knowledge and understanding gained in earlier years and can use this effectively to move forward. In a practical lesson designed to further develop understanding of the structure and function of the heart, most showed a good understanding of the double circulation system and how this leads to specific features of the construction of the heart. Observational and practical skills seen in this lesson were good. Comparison of GCSE results with A Level results shows that achievement of students who complete the course is satisfactory overall in respect of both theoretical and practical work. This is confirmed by the standard of work seen of students currently in school.

214. Students concentrate well in lessons and there is a very positive working atmosphere. They show interest in their work and co-operate well together in all tasks. Students take notes effectively during teacher presentations and can then use them in ensuing discussions. For example, a lively discussion on moral issues in cloning followed the presentation of a video clip from recent news on the cloning of CC the cat. Student folders are generally orderly and the presentation of some of the coursework is of a high standard.

215. Teaching and learning are good. The two teachers have very good subject knowledge, promoting confidence in their students, and very clear lesson exposition ensures the creation of a well-structured basis for learning. Questioning is used effectively for a range of purposes such as, for example, the establishment of the security of students' GCSE knowledge of the heart structure prior to a dissection exercise. Interaction with students is uniformly good and students with low attainment are well supported where appropriate. In a lesson requiring students to set up a chi-squared test, time spent with a few students allowed them to keep up with the rest. In some lessons students are effectively challenged to contemplate moral issues in biology. In a very well prepared lesson on cloning, development of scientific understanding of the process ran very well

alongside the use of video of recent examples to promote thinking about implications for the future of genetic engineering. Students experience a good range of activities including illustrative practical work as well as coursework and are also required to research some topics independently or in groups and present findings to the rest of the class.

216. Management of the subject is effective and there is an appropriate division of work between the two teachers. Schemes of work have been developed for the recently introduced course and are closely linked to the course specification. The teaching scheme for Year 12 is more developed in its detail than that for Year 13. Although opportunities are clearly being taken for the development of independent learning and the use of ICT, not all these opportunities are fully identified in schemes of work. Facilities for the use of ICT within the department are poor and students have to rely on access to computers elsewhere in the school and at home. Opportunities for data logging, for example, are extremely limited. Resources of other equipment and the supply of textbooks are adequate for the course and a recently created laboratory in which much of the biology teaching takes place provides a pleasant learning environment.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

217. There was no focus subject in this curriculum area but design and technology was sampled. The quality of provision is good; teaching is consistently good; students achieve well and make good progress. In the most recent examinations results were above average, and above the average for the school.

BUSINESS

218. Business studies was the focus subject. GNVQ provision was sampled. The school offers business education, CSLA, and leisure and tourism at Intermediate Level of the GNVQ, and leisure and recreation, travel and tourism and ICT at AVCE Level. Numbers of students on these courses are small but some students could not have followed the courses anywhere else without excessively long journeys to course centres. Administration is good overall and courses are carefully planned to meet the requirements of the examination board. Lessons are combined with CSLA students in the same class. Standards on the Intermediate business GNVQ are low largely because of low attainment on entry to the course. One student is repeating the course to gain a better result. Students are expected to complete the modules and obtain a pass. Teaching is good. It meets the need to be firm and is brisk and experienced. The level of challenge is appropriately demanding.

Business Studies A / AS Level

Overall, provision for business studies is good.

Strengths:

- The teaching ethos encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Attitudes to learning are very good, and students take their work seriously.
- Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- Schemes of work reinforce investigative and analytical work on behalf of students.

Areas for Improvement:

- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are limited.
- Access to ICT needs improvement.
- Induction arrangements could be strengthened.

219. Results at A Level in 2001 indicate a slight decline on the previous year when they were above the national average. The proportion of students gaining A and B grades is now around the national average. The overall candidate entry is relatively small and does not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made between the performance of boys and girls. This represents satisfactory achievement based on the attainment on entry of students to the Sixth Form.

220. There are no current AS results to report on. The department has recently moved to new external examination syllabuses, which will be examined for the first time in 2002. Retention of students on both the A and AS options is very good, and pleasing numbers of students continue to pursue their studies in this area when they proceed into higher education.

221. Standards in the work seen are around the national average. Higher and middle attaining students can identify, apply and evaluate ways in which firms can increase their effectiveness through management decisions. They have increasingly refined understanding of the way in which markets work. Students of all abilities are able to give working definitions of key concepts, including the working of price mechanisms, elasticity of demand and the effect of the market on wages. Oral skills are more roundly developed than those associated with extended writing. This reflects the heavy emphasis placed upon peer group learning and discussion in lessons such as that dealing with customer needs and wants in Year 12. There is a good body of recorded work, which displays generally sound deductive skills and makes good use of business concepts to explain particular events, for example signalling mechanisms in the context of product life cycles in the electronics industry.

222. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson input by teachers is animated and made accessible by building on the general knowledge of students, who are encouraged to build up a portfolio of news reports of current events in the business sector. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and key skills associated with the subject are presented well and assist students, particularly those of lower ability. In some lessons there can be a limited range of learning strategies. Students are at the appropriate point in their schemes of work. They can discuss their work with confidence, as, for example, in a lesson observed dealing with consumer demand in Year 12. Individual project work is well supported and displays opportunities for varied choices to be made by students interested in particular aspects, such as the local economy. They take their work seriously and are prepared to revisit coursework to improve upon it; this was exemplified in students working on the impact of business on the environment and the role of stakeholders. There are missed opportunities for extending induction arrangements for new students.

223. Marking is prompt and target setting is clear and consistent, though the use of this data to inform future curriculum planning and identifying potentially under-achieving students is underdeveloped. Limited opportunities currently exist for learning about business outside lessons. Opportunities are missed for creating practical learning situations through the use of more structured work in experiencing placements, work shadowing, or the use of inputs from the world of business.

224. Leadership and management are good, and there is a clear vision for the subject and its on-going development. There is a well-thought out development plan. Departmental communication is good, and meetings produce clear action points and accountability for staff. Self-evaluation and review arrangements are of good quality, and result in consistently good teaching approaches, which have a positive effect on learning. Rooms are in a poor decorative state, but the learning environment is good by virtue of plentiful displays of students' work. These could usefully be annotated to reinforce students' understanding of what constitutes good academic standards. Resources are generally adequate, though there is a shortage of artefacts for use in teacher presentations.

225. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has kept its schemes of work up to date and these meet the learning needs of students. The impetus to independent learning achieved through stimulating investigative work using contemporary exemplars has been maintained. Standards have been maintained also and business studies is a popular option choice at Post 16. Access to ICT, to develop higher order skills of data analysis and modelling, is limited, particularly during the normal school day. The pace of learning is slowed because of the need to share workstations, and also to use them on a rotating basis.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

226. The focus was on AS and A Level ICT. This is a new course and examinations will be taken for the first time in 2002.

Information and communication technology

Over, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Students have a sound grasp of concepts, apply them well in class work, in answering questions and during discussions. They are achieving well.
- Teaching is good. The sessions are well structured with a range of activities effectively helping students to build up their knowledge and understanding.
- Students work well together, sharing ideas and information freely.
- The course is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Access to computers for private and independent study.

227. There were no previous examinations in the subject at this level. The first examination takes place in 2002.

228. The standards of work of current students are above average. Students are achieving well. In the lessons seen, they were doing very well as a result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The structure and activities of the lessons clearly focused students' learning. Students recall knowledge well and apply it. Project work shows the same confidence as class work. The standard of students' work seen meets the demands of the course requirements.

229. Teaching is good, and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, a brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have good subject knowledge, and use this well in questioning and through the tasks set. In the lessons observed, opportunities were provided for students to practise what had been discussed, and their skills and techniques improved as the lessons progressed. The teacher drew together students' ideas and provided explanations. Students have opportunities to carry out research, working as individuals to formulate ideas and record their findings. Students respond confidently to activities.

230. Students learn very well. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience. In lessons observed, they rose to the challenge of designing spreadsheets for a specific purpose and producing expert systems for a client company. Time was used well. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way, as part of their learning. Students are always confident when offering ideas in more open discussion. In the lessons seen, students drew well on their knowledge of spreadsheet design, how ICT is used in business, and in meeting the requirements of a specification. The students recall knowledge and understanding well, and apply it. Project work generally shows the same confidence as their work in class.

231. The good teaching and learning result from work at this level being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved, and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflects the course requirement and determines the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance from testing and assessment are well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused. In the sessions observed, students were doing well as a result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and a high level of skill and expertise. They have high expectations, as indicated in the planned work; the evidence from the work presented shows that pupils have the necessary skills to meet the demands of the coursework requirements.

232. There is a good coverage of the syllabus. In each group, students experience a range of activities in depth. There is a consistent approach in relation to the quantity of work. The quality of work is above that expected for courses at this level. Marking is consistent. Teachers follow the guidance set out in the department handbook, and use the examination criteria to mark work. Marking is recorded, and contributes to the overall assessment levels given at the end of each unit. Indications are given about projected grades for the examination. A good level of feedback is given to individual pupils about progress and attainment, and comments about how they might improve their work. There is some level of student self-assessment. The attainment in Years 12 and 13 for current students is sufficiently high, and higher attaining students are likely to gain the highest

grades. The units taught at AS and A Level are appropriate, and appeal to students' interests. The evidence from the review of work shows that students take care with presentation of their work and are aware of the need to prepare and present information for an audience. There is limited access to computers for independent study.

233. Work from previous years shows good quality outcomes, and this is reflected in current work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

234. The focus was on physical education. There is good provision in physical education for Sixth Form students. AS and A Level courses, as well as the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) are available. There are no other accredited courses, nor any timetabled recreational activities for students in the Sixth Form. GNVQ provision was sampled.

235. Standards of attainment are above average on the Advanced GNVQ course of which one lesson was observed. Both students are expected to gain a credit for their work. They make confident oral contributions to their lesson on criteria for evaluating administrative systems. Teaching is good and challenges the students to use their knowledge effectively. Standards of attainment are below average on the Intermediate course partly because of low levels of attainment on entry. The course is taught jointly with the business group. It fulfils a social purpose in allowing time for candidates of low prior attainment to develop appropriate work habits. Teaching of a difficult combined group is good and students are expected to pass the course.

Physical Education

236. Overall the provision for physical education is good.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching.
- Leadership of the department.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Relationships between teachers and students.
- Students' interest and attitude towards physical education.
- All students starting the AS course stayed on to the A Level course.

Areas for improvement:

- Range of courses.
- Opportunities in extra-curricular activities.
- Accommodation for teaching theory and practical.
- Availability of ICT rooms and computer access for teaching.

237. Results of students taking AS and A Level physical education in 2001 were in line with national standards. The standard of work seen during the inspection indicates that students are working at the levels expected for their age in both AS and A2 courses.

238. On AS courses, students are able to compare pre-industrial and contemporary sports effectively, making use of the work they have done in previous lessons. They understand the impact of psychological and physiological aspects on sports performance. On A Level

courses, students understand the impact of cultural, traditional and historical factors motivating elite performers, as well as issues about 'world wide' games. Students make very good use of ICT to produce attractive and in depth individual studies in a range of sports such as golf and basketball. Students make good use of their previous knowledge, including psychological factors, energy systems, and the 'associative learning phase' in their individual studies. In the Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA) course, students have a good understanding of organisation of groups, and the planning of activity sessions for adults with learning difficulties, as well as for primary children.

239. Students make very good progress on AS and A Level courses. At AS Level, they are building on their knowledge of amateur and professional sports, and are making significant increase in their knowledge and understanding of 'athleticism,' and the influence of Thomas Arnold at Rugby School. At A Level, students increase their understanding of the development of the Olympic Games, as they make use of the work they have done at AS Level on historical factors affecting sporting developments. There is very good progress by students in CSLA as they learn how to adapt and modify table tennis to help adults with learning difficulties cope with the game. Achievement is good in all Sixth Form courses.

240. In AS, A and CSLA lessons, teaching is very good and better. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and make good use of a range of teaching styles, using well-selected video, focused question and answer, and well prepared work sheets. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and this contributes to students' learning. Teachers have a very good understanding of the examination requirements, which helps students, as well as guiding them in the completion of their individual studies. The excellent preparation for an AS lesson making use of a 'power point' presentation could not be put into practice because of the unavailability of a computer room. In CSLA, the students' excellent and caring relationship with the adults having learning difficulties was a significant factor in the students' personal development, where they showed considerable maturity.

241. There is very good leadership and management of the department, with well-organised and structured courses. The accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory, as there is no dedicated teaching room, which means that books, overhead projectors, notes and files have to be carried around the school to different teaching rooms at the start of lessons.

242. Although not reported on in the previous inspection, there has been good progress in the department, as students now have the opportunity to take A Level courses in physical education and the CSLA. There are no other accredited courses for students, no organised and planned recreational physical education, and limited opportunities for students to take part in inter-school fixtures.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

243. No subjects are taught.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

244. There was no focus subject but music provision was sampled. The overall provision for music in the Sixth Form is very good. Teaching is very good, with many excellent features. Students have excellent attitudes to their studies, make very good progress and have very good, and often excellent, standards of attainment. In both Years 12 and 13, students have high standards of practical performance, have well developed skills of stylistic analysis, and create well-formed, attractive compositions.

HUMANITIES

245. Geography was the focus for the inspection. Provision in history was sampled. Two history lessons were seen; in both teaching was very good and the standard of intellectual debate, particularly in Year 13, was of a very high standard. Teachers' subject knowledge was very good and planning was detailed. Relationships between students and with teachers are very good.

Geography

The overall provision for geography is very good.

Strengths:

- Standards are rising.
- The quality of teaching is good, and students make good progress.
- The department is well led, and teachers work together as an effective team.

Areas for improvement:

- Some students are deficient in independent learning skills.
- Policies for monitoring students' progress, and their entry for examinations, are insufficiently developed.
- Access to computers is insufficient.
- The learning environment is unsatisfactory.

246. Thirty-eight students are currently studying geography in the Sixth Form. All three full-time specialist teachers work with the Sixth Form.

247. In the most recent Advanced Level examinations, standards were below the national average. Students performed better in geography than in their other subjects. Three students gained an unclassified grade, and reduced the average standard; without them, other students attained at the national average. The number attaining the highest grades was below the national average. Four students were identified for support early in Year 13 so that their work was monitored. An improvement was secured for one of these students. The department is reviewing its monitoring procedures and its examination entry policy. Attainment at AS Level in 2001 was satisfactory. There are no national comparators for AS Level geography, but the numbers attaining the highest grades, and the average points scored, both matched the average performance for the A Level course.

248. Inspection evidence shows that standards are line with the national average. As students started the Sixth Form with average GCSE results, this represents satisfactory progress over time. In individual lessons they sometimes make very good progress. For example, they made very good progress in a lesson preparing them for a conference on

decision-making exercises. Students discussed in detail their own performance on an examination question done for homework. They showed a keen appreciation of the effort necessary to score the maximum marks. They marked some model answers to questions in groups, and came very close to the marks awarded by the examiner and the class teacher. The level of achievement, in the lesson preparing them for their research enquiry on National Parks, was satisfactory. Achievement in Year 12 on the AS Level course is good, because the groups contain a number of students having high or very high prior attainment. They clearly understand, and could apply to their case study of the Colorado River Basin, the problems of irregular river volume. Students talked in good extended sentences about the effect of the amount of snow fall, and the date of its melting, on the timing and volume of river flow. They knew the problems of catastrophic floods, and how soil conditions related to them. They could think laterally to work out the effects of flooding on the landscape. Progress is good in Year 12, and standards are rising across the Sixth Form.

249. Teaching is good, and in one lesson in four, it is very good. The great strength of teaching is the quality of teachers' subject knowledge. This helps students to deepen and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers' very good knowledge of the examination system enables them to give students detailed and effective guidance on how to improve their work. Basic skills are well integrated into research work and field studies. Students are guided well, in both years, on how to conduct their research topics and field studies. In Year 13 pupils discussed in groups their hypotheses for testing. They posed good questions and were helped to develop them by skilful questioning by the teacher. This developed the students' thoughts, rather than the teacher's views being imposed. A video player was provided for one group to watch a video they had pre-recorded, in order to discuss research about Aids and tropical diseases. Year 12 students were helped to develop their research proposals for fieldwork and were given sharp warnings about health and safety issues. The teaching styles now being developed in Years 7 to 9, involving pupils in their own learning, and helping them to learn independently, will take some time to work upwards through the school. Where they have been adapted for use in the Sixth Form, they are already being effective in helping students to think for themselves. Students are challenged to succeed, and teaching methods are mostly suitable. Expectations of students' work and behaviour are high, and are well met. Students are productive and work at a good pace, applying intellectual and creative energy to their work.

250. Students learn well, though those in Year 12 are better independent learners than those in Year 13. They are very attentive, and help the flow of learning, by becoming fully involved in question and answer sessions. They collate and analyse from a variety of resources such as maps, atlases, videos, photographs, CD-ROMS and the Internet.

251. Leadership of the department is good, and the three teachers work very well together as an effective team. They make very good provision for the teaching and learning of geography, despite some disadvantages. The room set aside for the teaching of the Sixth Form is depressing. Tables and furniture are in poor condition, the blackout is damaged, and there is no screen, so that teachers must use the wall for projecting images. Modern technology to assist the teaching and learning of geography is limited to the video player. There have been rapid changes in examination syllabuses, so that there are no up-to-date texts for preparing students for their examination. Teachers are changing and adapting what resources they have, and are doing this imaginatively. Stocks of reference materials in the library are limited, and access to computers for Sixth Form students is restricted.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

252. The focus was on English language at AS and A Level, but English literature was also sampled. In English literature, examination results in 2001 were above the national average showing good value added achievement. Attainment, moreover, has shown an upward trend during the period 1998 to 2001. Teaching and learning were observed to be very good. Students demonstrate sensitivity to the power of words and write about literature in a mature and scholarly manner.

253. In modern foreign languages, the focus was on French, but German was also sampled. The quality of provision in German is good. Advanced Level results have been generally below average over the last four years, with no grades A or B. The two students who took AS Level in 2001 gained B and C grades. Two lessons were observed, both good. Standards are average overall, with only one student in Year 13, who is above average.

English Language

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths:

- Attainment in English language is improving; standards are at the national average.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching is good with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- The subject is well led, creating a good ethos for learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Improving the use of ICT in the Sixth Form as a means of developing independent learning and research.
- Increasing the number of candidates, particularly the number of boys.
- Improving AS Level results in English language.

254. This subject caters for 13 students following AS and A Level courses in English language, and 17 students of English literature. There are seven students in Year 12; these are one boy and four girls, together with two girls from Year 13 studying the subject at AS Level as an optional extra.

255. In 2001 nine students took A Level English language examinations. Although the proportion of students gaining grades A or B was lower than the national average, the overall pass rate exceeded the national average with all candidates attaining at least grade E. This course was new to the school in 2000 when attainment was significantly below the national average. The average points score at A Level in 2001 was significantly higher than the average points score in 2000. Attainment in 2001 indicates that students achieved well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. However, the number of boys opting for this course was low - three in 2000 and only one in 2001. Although the results at AS Level English language in 2001 were below the national expectation in one of the units of work, all but two candidates continued on to the full A Level qualification.

256. Attainment in lessons matches national expectations, indicating an improvement over attainment in 2001. Students understand the essential terminology and concepts involved in the study of English language. For example, in one lesson they used their analytical skills to good effect in ascertaining how different accents enjoy varying levels of prestige, and how

advertisers exploit these associations to promote their products. Students show interest in their studies and a determination to succeed. For example, in another lesson, despite early difficulties, students were observed developing knowledge of the complex role language plays in social situations and social relationships. In coursework they are using increasingly careful analysis to illuminate their understanding of how language works on an audience.

257. There are six girls in Year 13. In the lessons observed, current standards are in line with national expectations. A sample of A Level work seen during the inspection indicates that higher attaining students are on target to achieve high grades. They are well able to adopt different linguistic registers appropriately – they write in an engaging manner on a wide range of linguistic issues. The coursework of others who entered upon the course with lower GCSE qualifications shows a good measure of value-added progression; however, these candidates show a tendency to describe linguistic features rather than analyse linguistic form and function. In one successful lesson students showed growing knowledge of the theories that have been developed to explain children's ability to acquire language. In another productive lesson students learned how language has changed over the ages. They understand how lexical changes occur when some words fall out of use and other new words are added, and how semantic changes occur when words remaining in use change their meaning. The majority explore relevant areas of investigation with clarity and interest.

258. All teaching and learning in the AS and A Level courses is at least good and some is very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge and a quiet enthusiasm for their subject. They ask probing questions to draw out what students know. The best learning is seen when the teacher demonstrates a skilful sense of timing, for example by offering fresh information at the appropriate moment when students are ready to assimilate it. Careful planning gives a purpose and shape to lessons and ensures a brisk pace. By the end of each lesson, aims have been achieved, knowledge consolidated, enthusiasm refreshed. Good relationships enable students to become fully engaged in their tasks. Use of well structured lessons and shared orderly discussion enables students to organise their thinking and advance with confidence to the next stage of learning.

259. The leadership and management of all Sixth Form learning in English are good. Entry requirements at AS and A Level are flexible to encourage a climate of inclusion. Students' good value added achievement has justified this policy. Procedures for marking and assessing coursework are sound. Students' progress is carefully monitored; teachers keep accurate records of their rates of achievement. The department has responded effectively to the challenges of the new AS and A Level courses. For example, careful monitoring of students' examination performance in 2001 at AS Level in English language has led to a thorough revision of the order in which various units are to be tackled. Year 12 students will now be able to build more systematically on their knowledge of language already achieved at GCSE. Management has created a good working ethos that will prepare students well for entry into higher education.

French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is good.

Strengths:

- The outstanding achievement of the two Year 13 students.
- The teachers' profound knowledge of their subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Strategies to aid recruitment to modern foreign languages.

260. Advanced Level results have fluctuated over the last four years, but are generally in line with national averages. Small groups in some years do, however, make comparisons unreliable. Apart from one student in 2001, all candidates have gained a pass grade. Very few boys take up French at Advanced Level, therefore comparisons of the performance of boys and girls are unsound. AS results in 2001 show that the two girls who did not continue to A Level both obtained grade B.

261. The current Year 13 students, both boys, are achieving above their previous AS attainment of grade C. In one lesson, in the form of a discussion of the challenging topic of euthanasia, the presentation of their arguments was outstanding. They showed highly developed research and presentation skills, organisation of ideas, and a mature appreciation of all aspects of the argument. Particularly impressive was the presentation by one student of the church's argument against euthanasia. In the written preparation, however, and in other written work, there was evidence of minor inaccuracies and occasional over-ambitious attempts at sophisticated expression. These would detract from written communication, but not be as obvious in oral presentation.

262. Students in Year 12 are finding the transition to AS Level extremely demanding, and some are still having difficulty in breaking away from the higher level GCSE standard. The more sophisticated language encountered in the listening and reading texts, plus the extension of constructions, grammar and syntax, have not yet begun to increase their confidence in expressing their ideas either orally or in writing. In one lesson, where each student gave an individual appreciation of a television programme, and was then given a role in a discussion on entertainment, there were signs of emerging confidence and an attempt to exploit a wider range of language and constructions in expressing ideas.

263. Teaching is good overall, and one lesson observed was very good. Clear objectives are set at the start of the lesson, for which students have thoroughly prepared. The lesson is conducted entirely in French, unless there is a need to stand aside and check understanding of complex grammar and constructions. Teachers display their profound knowledge of the language in the continuous discussion of issues arising from the topics, especially in the highly sophisticated arguments required in Year 13. They continually challenge the students to explain their findings and justify their arguments, for instance when one student was using the language laboratory to extract specific information about the metro in Paris. The pace is brisk and the questioning intense, and on occasions in Year 12 causes the exchanges to be more teacher-led, despite every encouragement, when the students do not feel they have the capacity to respond.

264. Intense work on previously learned and extended grammar supports students' attempts to raise the quality of their French expression to the highest level. The level of French presented to Sixth Form students is of a highly literary or journalistic nature,

consisting of serious articles from newspapers, magazines, course-books or the internet. Year 13 students are making a conscious effort to incorporate material such as subjunctive constructions and highly idiomatic phrases into their spoken and written work. In Year 12 there is still a certain nervousness about venturing into more sophisticated realms.

265. Students learn well. Much of the preparation for lessons is the result of independent research, from consulting dictionaries to acquiring material personally on the internet, or in newspapers and magazines. Their work rate, especially in Year 13, is prodigious, and portfolios are generally neat and well organised. They are attentive in class, and respond well to the supportive teaching and the differing methods used to further their learning. They support each other well in class activities, and benefit from detailed, constructive oral and written feedback on the work they submit. Year 12 students, however, need to be more independent in taking notes in class.

266. In its involvement with the Sixth Form the department is well organised and teachers consistently share the best practice. Students also have regular opportunities to enhance their knowledge and manipulation of the language through use of the language laboratory and ICT. Because of the small numbers students receive plenty of attention, and are constantly aware of how well they are progressing. The department is researching strategies to increase recruitment to Sixth Form languages.

267. Since the last inspection the attainment of students in listening and speaking has improved. Students are fully and actively involved in lessons, and all four skills are treated equally throughout the course.