

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **EASTHAMPSTEAD PARK SCHOOL**

Bracknell, Berkshire

LEA area: Bracknell Forest

Unique reference number: 110071

Headteacher: Jude Hanner

Reporting inspector: Roger Holmes  
2632

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 189893

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 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ringmead Bracknell Berkshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R W Riddaway
Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 1996

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23891	Peter Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Geography	Quality and range of the curriculum Extra-curricular activities
31191	David Sylph	Team inspector	History	Staffing, induction & training
20124	Jo Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Assessment
20172	Arthur Harvey	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Personal, social and health education
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Welfare, health & safety Support & guidance
24142	Silvia McConville	Team inspector	Art and design	Learning resources
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Easthampstead Park School is a mixed comprehensive, taking boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. There are currently 1370 pupils on roll, making it larger than most schools. Numbers have reduced over the last few years as the school has moved from having ten-form entry to eight-form entry as part of the local authority's re-organisation plans. There are regularly more applications for places than the school can accommodate. The sixth form has 164 students with significantly more in the first year than the second year.

Almost all the pupils and students in the school are white and, although 29 have English as an additional language, only one is at an early stage of learning the language. Unemployment in the area is very low and so the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (seven per cent) is lower than in most schools. Other indicators, such as parents' experience of higher education, are very close to the national average.

When they come into the school at 11 years of age, pupils' attainment has been close to average over the last few years. In most years there are slightly more pupils in the middle range and correspondingly slightly fewer of the most successful and least successful pupils than in most comprehensive schools. Twenty-six per cent of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, which is a higher proportion than in most schools, and three per cent have statements, which is about average.

Many more teachers than usual left the school at the end of the summer term in 2001. The school managed to fill all 22 of the vacancies this created but only by diverting considerable management time and effort and by recruiting several staff from abroad, one of whom failed to turn up in September.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Easthampstead Park provides a sound education for its pupils. Most pupils make appropriate progress through the school although not enough achieve the higher grades at GCSE. Teaching and management are sound. The sixth form provides a good education; students make good progress, they develop good study skills and results compare well with other schools, as a result of good management and teaching

In view of the cost of providing education at Easthampstead Park, the average results it achieves and the quality of care it provides for pupils, it provides satisfactory value for money overall, although in the sixth form this is good

#### **What the school does well**

- Provision in the sixth form is good and students achieve well.
- Standards in physical education are high.
- The school takes good general care of its pupils.
- The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school's facilities are good, particularly the library and the performing arts area.

### What could be improved

- Too few pupils achieve the higher grades of GCSE.
- Management has not concentrated sufficiently on raising pupils' achievement.
- Not enough use is made of assessment information to raise pupils' performance.
- Too many classes have the teaching of a subject shared by more than one teacher.
- There are too few alternatives to GCSE courses to meet the needs of some pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The behaviour of a few pupils sometimes disrupts lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9.
- Attendance is not high enough.

*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 September 1996. The five key issues for action have been tackled and most resolved: standards in oracy and literacy have improved well; provision for special educational needs is now sound and getting even better; opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness are satisfactory; marking is more helpful; and all statutory requirements are now met, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

However, in a number of other ways, the school is not as good as it was: results have fallen behind the national average at GCSE; attendance rates are lower; and management effort has been channelled into controlling pupils' behaviour and has not paid enough attention to shortcomings in the curriculum, timetabling, use of assessment and some teaching. At the same time the sixth form has moved forward well, largely as a result of management being focused on raising attainment. Overall the school has not made enough progress since the last inspection.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	C	

**Key**

well above average    A  
 above average        B  
 average                C  
 below average        D  
 well below average   E

The school's overall performance at GCSE is close to the national average, but not as many pupils achieve higher grade passes as in other schools who have a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and standards are not high enough.

Over the last few years the school's results have begun to fall behind the national average as it has risen. Girls have achieved higher results than boys, but there is less difference than in most schools. Results in physical education are particularly good, in most other subjects they are just below average, and in 2000 they were low in information and communication technology (ICT) and modern languages. In the work seen in the school leading up to GCSE, pupils are generally working at the expected levels in English, science, art, design and technology, history, religious education, ICT and business education. Standards are lower in mathematics and modern languages. In geography, music and physical education they are higher.

Results in the sixth form have improved markedly over the last few years and are now in line with the national average. This represents good achievement, with many students making more progress than their performance at GCSE would predict. The best results in 2000 came from mathematics, chemistry, computer studies, English literature and business studies. No subject under-performed significantly, considering the starting point of its students.

In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, results were average in English, mathematics and science. English results have improved well over the last few years from below average, mathematics and science have stayed much the same, and overall the school's results have not quite kept pace with the improvement of the national averages. From the work seen in the school up to Year 9, pupils are working at the levels expected for their age in English, mathematics, science, art, history, music and ICT. Standards are lower in design and technology and modern languages. They are higher in geography, physical education and religious education.

Pupils with special educational needs reach standards similar to those in other schools and they often make good progress when they receive specialist support.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to their learning. When lessons are interesting they are often eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well, but a small minority sometimes misbehave in class and spoil the lesson, particularly in Years 8 and 9. More pupils are excluded than in most schools.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils develop self-confidence. Relationships are generally good and younger pupils benefit from the support of older ones.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Despite the school's efforts absences have risen.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory, but it varies widely up to Year 11. Much of it is good, very good or excellent, but the effectiveness of this strong teaching is reduced by having more than one teacher per subject, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Teachers know their subjects well and in many lessons they make good use of this to make learning lively and interesting. Pupils then respond well, work hard and make progress. In some lessons there is not a strong enough sense of purpose and some teachers feel the need to concentrate on controlling pupils' behaviour so much that their lessons become dull and the pupils lose interest.

Teaching in the sixth form is much more consistently strong and students respond well to the high level of challenge in lessons.

Literacy is taught effectively in many subjects, pupils speak well when they are encouraged to and written work is generally well presented. The school has developed this area of work well since the last inspection. Numeracy has not benefited from the same whole-school approach, but a number of subjects contribute to its satisfactory development. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well by the specialist staff, but in lessons where specialist support is not available, teachers sometimes do not cope well enough, and the pupils make too little progress.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactorily broad and balanced, although there are too few alternatives to GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. There is a good range of sixth form courses, mainly at A and AS-level.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Provision is improving as a result of good management. Specialist support is good and pupils make good progress when they receive it.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. For moral and social development it is good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall, strong in relation to the pupils' own background, but with too little preparation for life in a multi-cultural community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have problems. Pupils' progress is monitored but more could be done to use this information to raise attainment up to GCSE; in the sixth form this is done well.

There is a good range of extra activities for pupils to follow, particularly in sport and the performing arts.

The school is generally popular with parents and has satisfactory links with parents and the community.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Management has been sound, ensuring that the school has run smoothly, but there has been too little focus on improving performance. The main focus has been on providing care and support for the pupils and this has been effective. Management in the sixth form is good. The newly appointed headteacher has a firm grasp of the issues and a clear vision for the way forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very committed to the school and carry out their duties meticulously. All statutory requirements, apart from daily collective worship, are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school collects a range of data about pupils' performance and also monitors teachers' work, but does not make enough use of what these show to improve attainment.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is planned carefully and expenditure is controlled very effectively. Resources are mostly used well, but current timetabling arrangements, which split the teaching of individual subjects in many classes between two or more teachers, are ineffective.

The school has good accommodation and adequate resources. There are sufficient teachers, but this was only achieved at the expense of considerable management time and effort at the end of last year. The school gives appropriate consideration to all its spending options when purchasing goods and services.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• There is a good range of extra activities</li> <li>• Pupils are helped to grow in maturity</li> <li>• The school has high expectations</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about pupils' progress</li> <li>• Working more closely with parents</li> <li>• The amount of homework</li> </ul>

Parents are very supportive of the school. The inspection team agrees with many of their positive views, particularly those relating to the care of pupils and the school's openness. The team does not think that expectation or progress are always good enough, except in the sixth form. The team agrees with parents on the areas that they would like to see improved: reports vary from subject to subject and do not always give enough information;

parents could be involved more positively in their children's education; and homework is not always set in accordance with the timetables.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive has 164 students. Very few of the students are from minority ethnic groups and all speak English well. It provides a wide range of A-level and AS courses and a few vocational courses. Nearby local colleges provide many more vocational courses. About 40 per cent of pupils continue into the sixth form from Year 11 and a similar sized group continue in post-16 education elsewhere. The school allows students into the sixth form for two-year courses with a minimum of four A\* - C grades at GCSE, provided they have good attitudes to work. This is lower than the entry requirements set by many schools. There are even lower requirements for students embarking on one-year courses.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and cost effective. Students make good progress and often achieve better results that would be expected from their previous attainment. Results are better than in most sixth forms and particularly good in mathematics, English literature, chemistry and ICT. Teaching is strong, with a high degree of academic rigour. Students are supported well, encouraged to improve their performance effectively and to take a wide interest in the world around them. Results have improved well over the last few years and have continued to rise in 2001, particularly for GNVQ courses.

#### Strengths

- Students make good progress and often achieve better results than their GCSE grades would predict.
- Teaching is strong.
- Leadership and management are good and have led to significant improvements in performance.
- Good use is made of assessment information to help students achieve well.
- Students are supported well and given good advice.

#### What could be improved

- Tutor time is not always used productively enough.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Consistently good. Results are consistently above the national average and rising. Teaching is strong and the department is

	well led.
Chemistry	Very good. Results are above average and rising. Teaching is very good and students respond well.
Physics	Satisfactory. Results have been broadly in line with national expectations. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good.
Business studies	Good. Results are above average. Students perform well although teaching is not always challenging enough.
ICT	Good. Results are well above average. Students learn well as a result of good teaching.
History	Good. Results are close to average but not as many students achieve the higher grades. Teaching is good and students progress well.
English literature	Good. Results are above average and have improved over the last few years. Teaching is good and students respond very well to the high expectations placed on them.
English language	Good. Results at AS-level are above average and are rising. Teaching is very good and the subject is well organised.
French	Satisfactory. Few candidates follow the course. They make satisfactory progress and persevere well when faced with difficulties. Teaching is satisfactory.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are given good advice on entry to the sixth form. Tutors support them well during their courses, using a wide range of information to identify how they can improve their performance. Advice on their next steps has recently been curtailed by reductions in the external careers service but the school has compensated well for this and the good level of guidance has been restored. Good study habits and skills are encouraged. Some tutor time is used well to support students and provide extra learning time, but this is not consistent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Management is good. Relatively low performance in the sixth form was recognised a few years ago and a clear strategy for improvement planned and implemented. Good use is made of assessment to help students achieve their best. There is close liaison between subject teachers and tutors. Targets for improvement are set, with students fully involved at all stages. Students' wider personal development is also fostered through the range of responsibilities given to them and through the general studies programme.

## 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"> <li>• The range of courses</li> <li>• Support to settle in</li> <li>• The quality of teaching</li> <li>• Support for independent study</li> <li>• Support from teachers and through assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on future options</li> <li>• Information about progress</li> <li>• The range of activities and enrichments.</li> </ul>

Over 90 per cent of students said they were enjoying the sixth form and would recommend it. The inspection team's judgements support this positive view strongly. The areas students would like to see improved are mostly legitimate concerns. Advice on future options has been curtailed by changes to the careers service, but should be back to normal now. Extra activities are provided and are not always well attended but they could be extended and more effective use made of tutor time to provide enrichment. Students do get regular information about how well they are doing and say that their work is thoroughly assessed. Perhaps this needs linking more explicitly to the targets they are working towards.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

- 1 When they come into the school at age 11, pupils' attainment in the national tests, which they took at the end of primary school, has been close to the national average over the last few years. Standardised tests, which measure the pupils' abilities in language, mathematics and non-verbal reasoning, confirm that the school's intake is very close to the average for all comprehensive schools, although in most years there have been slightly more middle ability pupils and correspondingly fewer pupils in the highest and lowest ability ranges.
- 2 Results in the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 for English, mathematics and science were all close to the national average, indicating that pupils made about the same progress as in most other schools. Mathematics and science results were slightly better than English results because some pupils achieved level 7 in these subjects, which is high for their age. Results in English have improved considerably since the last inspection. They have stayed much the same in mathematics and science and overall they have not risen as quickly in the school as they have nationally.
- 3 Standards of work seen in the school up to Year 9 roughly match this picture in English, mathematics and science, with pupils working at the standards expected for their age. In other subjects, standards are at the expected level for art, history, music and ICT. They are lower than expected in modern languages and in design and technology. In geography, physical education and religious education, they are higher.
- 4 In the GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* – C has been below the national average for the last few years. In 2000, 35 per cent of pupils achieved this, compared to 47 per cent nationally. This represents less progress from the end of Year 9 than is made in most schools and is lower than the results of similar schools. The school does better with pupils who achieve a relatively large number of lower grades at GCSE. The school's average point score, which takes into account all GCSE results, not just the A\* - C grades, was close to the national average in 2000. This represents similar progress from the end of Year 9 to that achieved in most schools, but was still not as good as that achieved by similar schools. Overall, results have been close to the national average for the last five years, although they have not risen as quickly and are falling behind, largely because too few pupils are achieving the higher grades. Over this period girls have received higher grades than boys, but not by as much as in most schools. Targets for GCSE have not been set high enough and the school has not done well enough in this area.
- 5 Results at GCSE are much better in physical education than in other subjects and well above the national average. Geography, English language, business education, art and science do better than other subjects in the school, but their results are below the national average.
- 6 The standards of work seen in the school are high in physical education, as these results indicate and are generally at the expected level for pupils' age in other

subjects, except for geography and music where they are above, in mathematics where they are below, and modern languages where they are well below.

- 7 Students with special educational needs reach standards that are close to those found in similar schools nationally at ages 14 and 16. There are students on the special educational needs register who are reaching standards higher than other students in their class, for example in physical education. Standards are lower where there is no support in class, for example in some music and ICT. Results of tests on entry show that the number of students joining the school with learning and behavioural difficulties is increasing. They make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. In lessons where teachers set clear learning objectives, and their work is valued, pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson all lower attaining pupils worked well to complete calculations of perimeter. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson the teacher phrased questions about pie graphs in a variety of ways that enabled the group of pupils with statements of educational and behavioural need to make at least satisfactory progress. Students with literacy difficulties are well supported by the English department. Imaginative poetry written by students who are on the special needs register is included in the magazine 'Word Web'. In history, a Year 10 student writes at length to explain the difference between fact and opinion about Jack the Ripper. Year 11 students express their views about characters in 'Romeo and Juliet'. These efforts and achievements are valued in teachers' comments.
- 8 However, the achievement of this group of pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, is not supported by the school's practice of timetabling two or three teachers for each subject. Work is divided between several books and in many lessons during the inspection pupils did not have the right book with them. Sections in some pupils' books in several subjects remain unmarked. As a result, presentation can vary widely for the same student, for example real care being taken in history, but careless, unfinished work being presented in religious studies. This reduces the progress made with fluency and legibility of handwriting. .

### **Sixth form**

- 9 Results in the sixth form are close to the national average, having improved markedly since 1997. When they come into the sixth form many of the students have lower qualifications at GCSE than would be expected as entry requirements by many schools. These results represent good progress during the course, with most students achieving better results at A-level and at GNVQ level than their previous performance would predict. In 2000 the most successful courses were mathematics, chemistry, computer studies, English literature and business studies, where results were above or well above average. Results were below average in biology, art and design, and history.
- 10 In the work seen during the inspection, standards were at an appropriate level in history, modern languages, physics and business studies. Standards were better than this in English, mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, geography and physical education. In computer studies they were particularly high. In art and design they were lower than usual for this stage of education but this represented satisfactory progress for the students concerned. Students have individual targets, which are clear, challenging and lead to good progress. This is an important feature of the sixth form's success. Students are making appropriate progress and reaching satisfactory standards in the newly established Key Skills courses.

- 11 Overall progress across the school is satisfactory up to GCSE but too few pupils achieve the higher grades. Progress in the sixth form is good as a result of well-focused teaching and sensitive monitoring of students' progress classes.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

- 12 Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour and relationships towards others are satisfactory overall, a slight deterioration since the previous inspection. When given the opportunity, however, they still show a good sense of responsibility and sensitivity towards others' ideas and beliefs. Parents are generally content with the standards of behaviour developed by the school. A small minority of pupils are less keen to learn, and show this at times by their misbehaviour in lessons and by the way they find too many excuses to miss school. This contributes to the way attendance is now unsatisfactory, having dropped somewhat since the previous inspection.
- 13 Pupils show overall satisfactory attitudes and behaviour across the range of school activities. Away from lessons, enthusiasm is readily apparent from pupils who are involved in extra-curricular activities, especially opportunities in performing arts and sport. In lessons there are wide variations. Where teaching is good they readily become interested and involved. They respond well to practical work, to variety and relevance in their tasks and to good management. At such times good relationships are apparent between pupils and with the teacher. In a few lessons, when teaching is really good, concentration and willingness to learn is very obvious. This happened in a well-structured dance lesson where the teacher's energy and enthusiasm infected Year 10 pupils, so that they worked co-operatively in groups, discussed ideas confidently and made good progress with developing their own dances. Good co-operative work with respect for others' feelings and ideas is also often seen, for instance, in good lessons in religious education, English, and history. Where teaching is more ordinary, however, behaviour is acceptable but enthusiasm is lacking. There are instances where pupils remain compliant even when teaching skills are inadequate. However, in a few classes, more often in lower ability groups in Years 8 and 9 but also in other groups, a number of pupils tend to become restless and uninterested. Relationships deteriorate, especially when the teacher lacks adequate skills and confidence in managing behaviour and when the content of the lesson is mundane. For instance, in an unsuccessful German lesson for a middle ability group, pupils were noisy and reluctant to listen to the teacher, and their progress also suffered because they were not prepared to make an effort and work independently. Another factor affecting the development of working relationships is that pupils on average have lessons with a greater number of teachers than happens in other schools.
- 14 Around the school and site pupils are usually friendly and well meaning. At times they show consideration for others, for instance by opening doors. Often, though, a degree of thoughtlessness is apparent, for instance in the way they disregard the school's 'keep left' rule as they crowd through corridors in a hurry to reach their next lesson. Thoughtlessness is also evident in pupils' carelessness over litter. Site staff regularly remove the rubbish that pupils discard when they have their snacks at break, but within a few hours the site always looks just as untidy as before. A number of younger boys tend to become over-boisterous towards each other in their play, though this generally does not arise from any real intention to harm. Real unkindness towards each other, for instance hurting comments between girls, does

arise from time to time but the school has good procedures in place to tackle such bullying. Pupils show a good level of confidence that pastoral staff, or else sixth form students at the drop-in centre, will help them and resolve matters fairly. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated, and teachers are generally accorded a satisfactory degree of respect, irrespective of their different racial backgrounds.

- 15 Exclusions are high. A few pupils find it very hard to control themselves and occasionally show really poor behaviour, involving at times defiance of staff or even physical violence, even when good efforts are made to help them behave properly. As part of its behaviour management policy, the school firmly reinforces expectations when poor behaviour occurs. Exclusion is satisfactorily used as part of the structured system of sanctions when other strategies prove inadequate or inappropriate to improve matters. The rate of exclusions has increased since the previous inspection. Many other schools have a lower rate of fixed term exclusions and four out of five have a lower rate of permanent exclusions.
- 16 Pupils generally show good evidence of wider aspects of their personal development when the opportunity arises. Most have a sense of pride in their school and show thoughtful understanding of its aims for their learning and behaviour. Younger ones especially appreciate the range of awards they can gain for good work and effort. However, careless, untidy work in some exercise books shows that pride in achievement and motivation to do well is not consistent. Most pupils regret the way misbehaviour of a few can disrupt lessons. They appreciate being able to influence the organisation of the school through the upper and lower school councils, as when they contributed to a decision to purchase picnic benches.
- 17 Attendance is unsatisfactory. Despite the good efforts of pastoral staff, it has remained barely over 90 per cent for the past two years. While attendance is maintained at overall satisfactory levels in Years 7 to 9, it is unacceptably low in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils come to school regularly and some have excellent attendance. Year 7 pupils tend to have better attendance than others. However, a significant minority in every year group cause concern by their frequent absences from school. For instance, during the last school year, around one in every five Year 9 pupils was identified as having poor attendance. Significant improvements were achieved through the school's efforts, but nevertheless by the end of the year more than one in ten of the year group still had individual overall attendance of less than 85 per cent. Some absences are due to difficult personal circumstances, but often lack of interest in learning is a factor. The school is aware that, even in a proportion of relatively affluent homes, education has a low priority and finds it hard to counter this influence. In addition, there are instances when pupils' experience in school fails to motivate them. Absences have a significant impact on the progress and attainment of the pupils involved. They also slow the pace of learning for other pupils, because of the time lost when the teacher has to recap previous work for the benefit of those who missed it. More unauthorised absence (truancy) is recorded now than at the time of the previous inspection, and rates are higher than in other schools. This apparent rise results from the school's properly critical approach to examining excuses given for absence. Staff reject excuses such as shopping expeditions, to reinforce to parents that it is not in order for them to condone their child's absence from school when in reality there is no acceptable reason.

## **Sixth form**

- 18 Sixth form students show good, mature attitudes to their work. They are very aware that they are present through their own choice and they make good efforts to benefit from the place they have gained. They appreciate the support and interest of their teachers and are keen to make the progress that is expected from them. They also value the high quality of facilities, such as the library, available on the site. In lessons a high level of concentration is usually apparent in response to the good teaching they experience, and their attention seldom strays. When teaching is outstanding, as in an AS mathematics lesson, their confidence as learners becomes impressive and they are keen to continue work after the lesson to learn still more. The good relationships and willingness of students to help each other and to co-operate with teachers are other important features that speed progress with learning. With support from teachers, students develop good skills for organising their own learning. They appreciate the way that study periods are included in their timetables. A good level of responsibility and capability to persevere even without any direct input from teachers is evident in the way they make good use of these sessions.
- 19 Other aspects of personal development are also good in the sixth form, in response to the high expectations of staff and the opportunities that they provide. Students contribute through their sixth form council to decisions that affect themselves, for instance organising their own social functions. They show mature confidence when they conduct parents and children on guided tours of the school during the open day. They also contribute to the well-being of both the school and the wider community through various community service options. For instance, several have trained to be peer counsellors and run a drop-in centre for younger pupils, while every year a group undertakes the production of a 'talking newspaper' that has considerable circulation amongst the blind and partially sighted people in the local community. However, in some respects their interests and aims in the context of wider and world communities are restricted. When recording hopes for their own future in a Year Book, many preferred to put on record just aims for their own personal status and financial success. During the inspection, attendance at a well-publicised lunchtime debate about possible ways forward in dealing with terrorism was disappointingly low, although those who did attend showed a good grasp of current world events.
- 20 Attendance in the sixth form is good, reflecting students' very positive attitudes to learning. This aids continuity and consistency in their progress. Students learn to be responsible in contributing to records of their attendance, for instance by signing out when they have any reason to leave the site during the day.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

- 21 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the sixth form it is good, with over 70 per cent of lessons good, very good or excellent, and only one unsatisfactory lesson seen. In the main school the majority of lessons are at least good, with over 20 per cent very good or excellent, but their impact on pupils' learning is reduced because of the unusually large number of classes who have more than one teacher for a subject. In English, for example, only two classes of the 54 groups in Years 7 to 11 have a single teacher, the others have at least two and in Year 7 the average is three. This arrangement of split classes makes it more difficult for pupils and teachers to get to know each other, sometimes meeting only once each fortnight. It also results in pupils' learning in a subject being unusually fragmented where they follow different topics with each of their teachers. Thus some classes are working

on three different mathematics topics at the same time, sometimes with a week's gap between lessons in the same topic. Consequently, even when these lessons are taught well, as they often are, more time than usual has to be spent reviewing the previous work, pupils' ideas do not develop so readily and they do not make as much progress as they should. This is particularly noticeable in Years 8 and 9.

- 22 In a few lessons (seven per cent) the teaching was unsatisfactory. Most of these were in Years 8 and 9 and over half of them were taught by teachers new to the school this year, several with overseas qualifications but no previous experience of English schools. A disproportionate number of these lessons were in modern languages and this is contributing to the low standards in French and German up to GCSE. These lessons suffered from the lack of a clear sense of purpose and did not involve the pupils enough. In some cases this resulted in misbehaviour, which the teacher did not manage adequately.
- 23 Teachers all know their subjects well and are often well qualified. In many lessons they make very effective use of their expertise and understanding to make work lively and stimulating for the pupils. In these lessons, pupils respond well, answering questions thoughtfully, entering into discussions so that they help each other develop their understanding, and working hard. Relationships are often good in these lessons and pupils make progress, responding well to the pleasant working atmosphere. For example, in an English lesson with Year 10, the teacher gave a brief and lively introduction to the task of producing a play script, ensuring that the pupils knew what to do and also why they were doing it. Very good organisation and a clear purpose helped the teacher drive the lesson along; pupils responded with enthusiasm, working together well and making very good progress.
- 24 Lesson plans are supported by effective schemes of work but there is considerable variation between them, even in the same department. Some concentrate appropriately on what pupils will learn and say how different groups will all be involved. Others focus on what pupils will do rather than learn and a few list what the teacher will do. In the lessons resulting from this unsatisfactory planning, introductions last for too long, the pupils are often passive for much of the lessons and they do not know what they have learnt at the end. In contrast, many lessons are tightly structured yet provide ample opportunity to respond to pupils' particular needs; for example, in a physical education lesson with Year 8 pupils on basketball the teacher ensured that the pupils knew that they were to develop techniques for attacking out of defence. Moves were examined and discussed around the white boards. After an inspiring demonstration pupils practised moving the ball from a fast break to a lay-up. The teacher helped pupils improve through careful observation of their performance and by continually stressing the key learning for the lesson. Pupils also helped each other with positive comments and self-evaluation. When they moved into a game they were immediately able to deploy their new learning, combining skills, techniques and tactics at a much higher level than usual for their age.
- 25 Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively in almost all lessons but inappropriate behaviour from a few pupils, which disrupted others, was a feature of many of the unsatisfactory lessons and was sometimes evident in lessons which were otherwise satisfactory. Controlling behaviour has been a major preoccupation in school and in some lessons the teacher's determination to exercise control limits the pupils' involvement. This sometimes leads to the pupils becoming frustrated and generates the very problems that the teacher is trying to avoid.

- 26 Learning for pupils with special educational needs is effective in lessons where teachers set an appropriate level of challenge and work is structured to build confidence. When work is not sufficiently challenging, or teachers do not have pupils' full attention, no substantial learning takes place. Teachers and learning assistants work well together. Learning assistants are very effective at keeping pupils focused and help probe their understanding of new work. Pupils are well supported in mainstream lessons when learning assistants are present; however, their low levels of concentration mean that learning in subjects such as mathematics, music and ICT is less satisfactory when pupils are unsupported. They make good progress in individual and small group withdrawal sessions.
- 27 Literacy is generally taught well across the curriculum. The school has developed this area well since the last inspection and most subjects now contribute successfully to developing pupils' skills in communication. Pupils listen well and express themselves clearly in speech, although they do not get enough opportunity to practise these skills in some lessons. They are encouraged to read for information in many subjects, and they are helped to deal with the specialist vocabulary that they meet. Writing is generally well presented and subjects such as history and music encourage pupils to describe events and express feelings in their work. There is not a whole-school approach to numeracy and although pupils make use of their numeracy skills in a number of subjects, for example reading graphs in geography, opportunities to reinforce these skills are sometimes missed. There is also a lack of co-ordination in the teaching of ICT across the curriculum. It is not planned into the schemes of work for many departments and teachers do not feel confident in using ICT with pupils.

### **Sixth form**

- 28 Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are planned well and students are often closely involved. Teachers succeed in encouraging the students to accept the challenge of high-level work by making it relevant and interesting. They build the students' self-confidence through careful progression of the work and by skilful questioning and response to students' replies. For example in a mathematics lesson with Year 12 the teacher built on students' existing knowledge of Pythagoras' Theorem to generate the general formula for the position of the mid-point of a line on a graph, ensuring that students understood fully through the use of well-posed questions.
- 29 Students' learning skills and independence are encouraged in many lessons and through the support they receive in study periods. Key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well in a carefully planned programme and students achieve well as a result. They respond well in lessons, taking an active part and often entering into lively, challenging and well-informed discussion about the issues being covered.

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

- 30 Overall the curriculum is satisfactorily broad and balanced, and all statutory requirements are met in the main school.
- 31 In Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3), all subjects of the National Curriculum are covered in sufficient depth, although there are time constraints on, for example, science and

the humanities, and ICT does not yet play a big enough part in all subjects. Setting in most subjects addresses the needs of most ability levels, although higher attainers need greater challenge to raise their standards. The school has begun looking at how it will implement the new Key Stage 3 Strategy. The developments it has already made with literacy skills across the curriculum will act as a good model for broadening the approach to numeracy. Provision for special educational needs is good when suitable teachers take smaller groups and where learning support assistants are available to help individual pupils.

- 32 In Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4), all subjects are offered to GCSE level, and the option structure enables all to take at least a short course in ICT. Design and technology, modern languages and ICT are grouped to allow two and a half GCSEs to be studied between them. A small group of lower attainers are disapplied from modern foreign languages and take a work-related 'life skills' course in double option time, with dual award science taken successfully in less time but with individual attention in a small group. Certificate of Achievement Courses are taught in English and religious education. Other departments are considering Certificate of Achievement, but otherwise there is insufficient provision for low attainers or for a work-related curriculum for disaffected pupils. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 does not therefore satisfactorily meet the interests and aptitudes of all pupils. The large numbers of U grades in some subjects indicate inadequate guidance on courses and levels, although careers education and guidance overall is very good. Strengths in the main school curriculum are the expressive arts areas and physical education, with their superb facilities. The temporary music staffing problems do not detract from the good provision with three expressive arts GCSE groups as well as drama and music.
- 33 Extra-curricular provision is very good for pupils in Years 7 to 11, with lunchtime or after-school clubs run in most curriculum areas, and a wide range of sports and games before and after school as well as in the lunchtime. The library is well used and frequented by all year groups whenever possible. There are many visits and fieldwork activities out of school, for days or longer residential activities at Chideock Camp, and visitors to the school enhance the extra-curricular provision, such as the poets and authors during Book Week.
- 34 Provision and curriculum planning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. It is well adapted to enable pupils with health needs to access physical education. Work-related alternatives to GCSE are available; however, there is a limited range of sixth form courses that provide a clear progression from Year 11. The curriculum is supported by breakfast, homework, paired reading and scrabble clubs for pupils with special educational needs. Post-16 students help pupils with these activities. Links with feeder primary schools are very good and the head of learning support meets with pupils in their own school before they visit Easthampstead Park.
- 35 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Some subjects, notably art, English and drama, history, personal and social education and religious education make effective contributions to pupils' awareness of the varieties of beliefs and values held by individuals and societies. Pupils are alerted to the non-material dimension of human beings. They learn how beliefs and values interact with individual behaviour and social customs.

- 36 The school offers all pupils a collective act of worship each week. Assemblies, during the period of inspection, focused on events in Afghanistan and were worthwhile experiences. However, the school is not meeting its statutory obligations in full. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school's aims, code of conduct, anti-bullying and anti-racism policies and system of rewards and sanctions offer pupils clear guidelines for positive behaviour. Many pupils know what constitutes acceptable behaviour. In many subjects pupils have opportunities to explore the moral aspects of such themes as prejudice and discrimination, racism, bullying and sexual relationships and genetic engineering. The school's positive 'behaviour for learning' strategies are supported by its effective pastoral provision
- 37 The provision for pupils' social development is good. All subjects offer pupils opportunities to develop and practise basic social skills. The school's pastoral arrangements also contribute well towards pupils' social development by encouraging pupils to interact well together. The majority of pupils co-operate well in class, on visits and in musical, dramatic and sporting activities. Pupils have varied opportunities for taking responsibility such as participating in a school council, acting as team captains, and organising charitable events and parties for local senior citizens. In religious education and personal and social education pupils learn about the rights and responsibilities of family life and citizenship
- 38 The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school provides an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about British culture past and present. They gain first-hand experience of European cultures by visits to Belgium, France, Germany and other European states. Pupils have recently benefited from visits by a poet, authors, and an artist who has worked with pupils. Visits to theatres, galleries and historical venues are a feature of the extra-curricular programme. Pupils learn about Indonesian music, aspects of Indian and Egyptian culture in art, and some beliefs and practices in six major world religions. Pupils are also introduced to examples of literature by black authors. Visits to ethnic minority centres and visitors from such centres need to feature more prominently in the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some subjects could do more to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of ethnic minority cultures. Respect for, and tolerance of, different beliefs and cultures underlie the school's provision.
- 39 The provision for careers education and guidance is very good and is led and managed well by the careers co-ordinator. The taught programme has been successfully integrated into the personal, social and health education curriculum, and teachers are able to use very good resources, developed within the school, ensuring consistency and continuity. All pupils have interviews with careers officers on the school site and there are additional opportunities to meet with employers and training providers throughout the school year. There is regular access to careers guidance materials in the school resource centre and staff are available to give advice. All pupils are timetabled for work experience in Year 10. The personal, social and health education programme also covers sex education and drugs awareness.
- 40 The school has good links with the local community. For instance, a work-related learning programme benefits a group of special needs' pupils. Support from local industry, including regular input from personnel who act as mentors for the pupils involved, is a key factor in this programme. Understanding of the needs of pupils

from the nearest housing estate is aided by a member of staff who has a long-standing involvement with the community, for instance through the youth centre. Careers guidance benefits from the support of a wide range of local employers that allows all Year 10 students to undertake work experience placements.

- 50 There are satisfactory links with partner institutions. Pastoral links with feeder primary schools, especially with the four main ones, are good. There are also a number of useful curricular links. A bridging project has been successfully introduced in English for pupils transferring from the main feeders, but a similar mathematics initiative was less fruitful because of staff changes. In the current year there are plans to run such projects in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Links with the local Pupil Referral Unit result in appropriate provision for a few pupils. There are satisfactory links with other post-16 institutions and training organisations to help ensure that pupils in Years 10 to 11 have a good range of information available when they are making choices about their future pathways.

### **Sixth form**

- 51 The sixth form curriculum is broad and balanced for the more academic students, with a wide range of A and AS-level courses on offer as well as level 2 vocational courses in business and health and social care. An intermediate business vocational course is popular, but foundation level students go to more specialised courses at the local college. The present option structure does not make it easy for students to study two languages as well as the other courses they want to follow. There is provision for discussion and study of moral and social issues in the personal, social and health education and complementary studies programme, which includes good provision for careers advice. Students can opt for a religious studies course as part of this programme. There is a well-planned programme covering the recently introduced requirements to teach Key Skills. A general studies course is taught in tutor periods; this provides little time to cover the work although results are satisfactory. Enrichment post-16 includes recreation time, and there are opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities on offer to the main school.
- 52 The provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development in the sixth form is much the same as in the rest of the school, with the additional benefits that some students get from supporting younger pupils through the 'listening ear' and similar projects. The school offers a full programme of religious education to all pupils throughout the sixth form and a few students take up this opportunity.
- 53 There are satisfactory links with the local community to aid students' studies, for instance on GNVQ courses. Others benefit from using sports facilities in the locality as part of their physical education programme. The school is taking the sensible step of starting to explore the possible benefits, in curricular terms, of developing partnerships with other local providers of post-16 education.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

- 54 The pastoral care for pupils is organised through a system in which heads of year have a key role and pupils speak favourably of the support they receive. Teachers know their pupils well and parents report that they are pleased with this support. Pupils meet their tutors for 20 minutes at the beginning of four afternoon sessions. During this time, tutors check homework diaries, monitor pupils' progress and raise

issues that link with their personal education programme. However, this time is not used effectively by all tutors.

- 55 Procedures for child protection are good and support from the social services is good. Procedures are clearly identified in the staff handbook and teachers are aware of the link person in the school. There is a whole-school policy for health and safety, and risk assessment inspections are carried out on a regular basis. Arrangements for first aid are good. Good support is provided by two 'in school' welfare officers to advise and help pupils with personal and health problems.
- 56 Pupils' academic progress is monitored, but the system does not work well enough. Pupils have individual reviews after interim and end of year reports and internal examination and, with their tutors, they agree learning. These targets are in general terms and not linked well enough to what pupils need to do in order to improve their performance in each subject.
- 57 Pupils in Year 10 and 11 are being mentored in their GCSE examinations. The collection of data on pupils' present attainments allows tutors to set targets. These procedures are in their early stages. There is a central record-keeping system and comprehensive records are kept on all pupils. This supports pupils' progress by providing them with a clear picture of how well they are attaining and where the focus of their efforts should be channelled to reach higher standards. The school's 'listening year', a system where pupils can discuss problems with an older pupil, has provided good support for pupils in the past.
- 58 Pupils' personal development is well supported by a good personal, social and health education programme.
- 59 Standardised assessment of pupils with special educational needs is regular and thorough. Teachers are regularly informed of pupils' needs and the recommendations in their action plans. Statements of special educational need are regularly reviewed, and parents and pupils are fully involved in the process. All statutory requirements are met. However, there are inconsistencies in the use made of assessment data to match work to achievement levels of pupils. The monitoring of the effectiveness of provision across subjects is an area for further development.
- 60 Pupils with special educational needs are supported well throughout the school and parents are frequently consulted. Careers education and guidance is effectively provided and very good care is taken to match work experience placements with individual pupils' needs.
- 61 Procedures for monitoring behaviour are satisfactory overall. Good routines for managing behaviour, including systems of awards and sanctions, are in place. Pastoral staff often work very hard to reinforce expectations of behaviour and to support the minority of individuals who find it hard to behave themselves because of low motivation to learn or other factors. There is very good liaison with a range of outside agencies to support pupils with identified behavioural difficulties.
- 62 Appropriate individual plans are in place for those pupils identified as having particular behavioural difficulties and these often help them to make satisfactory improvements. However, other factors detract from these good features. Firstly, there are occasional inconsistencies in how misbehaviour is managed, because a

minority of teachers, including some new to the school, do not always use suitable behaviour management strategies in a lesson and behaviour of the class deteriorates. The school does have mechanisms in place to support such teachers but nevertheless there are times, particularly in lower ability groups, when a few pupils disrupt learning. Where support staff are present this helps to improve matters but they are not always scheduled to be there. Secondly, and more crucially, the development of pastoral strategies to help pupils behave has not been matched by consideration of how styles of teaching and learning can influence pupils' behaviour. There has not been enough prompting from senior managers to extend teaching skills where these are mundane, so some lessons tend to be flat and boring. Pupils themselves recognise that behaviour is often better if a lesson is made to seem interesting. Appropriate use is made of an alternative curriculum to motivate some of the least able pupils, but overall the school has been rather slow to examine the way that the curriculum on offer may alter pupils' interest in lessons. Lastly, the way that a class often has two or more teachers within one subject means that some teachers sees any one group of pupils less frequently than would otherwise be the case. This makes it harder for teachers to learn the names of pupils, let alone to get to know and respond to their differing personalities.

- 63 Exclusions are used satisfactorily as part of the structured system of sanctions, in response to incidents of really poor behaviour. Both fixed term and permanent exclusions are used more frequently than in most other schools. This follows to an extent from the weaknesses outlined previously in steps to promote good behaviour, though the presence of a small but significant number of pupils with pronounced behavioural difficulties also has a marked effect. Most exclusions are for a few days only, so that a reasonably prompt return to lessons is usually achieved.
- 64 Procedures of monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. There is no evidence of racism in the school. Although the school accepts that some bullying occurs it is firmly dealt with and pupils and parents confirm this. Trained sixth form students offer an extra source of supporting any bullying problems by operating a drop-in centre which pupils can readily use.
- 65 Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good overall, although still barely sufficient to maintain attendance levels given the significant minority of pupils who show poor attendance. A computerised registration system is operated effectively to help identify pupils with unsatisfactory attendance, and administrative staff play an appropriate part in promptly contacting the homes of such pupils if they fail to register at school. Pastoral staff make a good contribution to promoting attendance. For instance, in the year preceding the inspection a weekly monitoring programme led to good increases in attendance amongst a large minority of a group of targeted Year 9 pupils, though others generally avoided further deterioration rather than improving. Until recently, discontinuities in support from the education welfare service, due to changes in the personnel appointed to serve the school, have limited its contribution to improving attendance. Currently the school has good input from the service, with the education welfare officer making an increasing number of home visits to follow up the absence of pupils identified as having particularly poor attendance. The school recognises the gaps in learning that arise due to family holidays in term time, and now takes a strong line about this, refusing to authorise absence for such reasons if the pupil already has an unsatisfactory attendance record. A small minority of homes give low priority to academic success and do little to encourage pupils to come to school regularly. This, coupled with the

missed opportunities to motivate pupils that also affect their behaviour in lessons, handicaps the efforts of pastoral staff to improve attendance.

- 66 The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Although there are satisfactory procedures for actually assessing pupils, insufficient use is made of the information gained. Until recently there was very little information available centrally which might indicate trends or identify individuals who might be under-performing. This data is now available but the use of it by departments is not widespread. Very few departments use the information to plan how they can improve results. As a consequence, the large number of pupils who did not gain a grade in the GCSE and the number of pupils who gained a grade D instead of a C, have gone largely unchecked at departmental level. The pastoral system has systems in place to check on individual pupils' academic progress which are mostly the responsibility of the tutor. This is not always reinforced by pupils talking to their subject teachers and planning specific things they need to do to improve. In physical education, however, where assessment procedures are very good, pupils' progress is clearly tracked, targets are set for improvement and are reviewed regularly. In ICT and history there is good use made of the data collected from examination results, reports and other commercial schemes to indicate how much progress could be expected in the future. In most cases, teachers rarely use information about performance to tell pupils exactly what they have to do to improve or to set clear, manageable targets. This weakness has already been identified by the school which has now planned formal target setting days when pupils in Year 7 and their parents will be invited in to discuss targets. Progress since the previous inspection in this area has been unsatisfactory.
- 67 The school makes some use of assessment data to influence curriculum planning. Results of National Curriculum tests are usually taken into account when planning the options available in Year 10 so that pupils have access to a range of courses and accreditation suited to their needs, including the Certificate of Achievement and full or short course GCSEs. However, there are few alternatives to GCSE courses. Assessment is generally used consistently within subjects to inform teaching. For example, in English and physical education, it is used to group pupils appropriately in teaching sets and to guide curriculum planning.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Assessment**

- 68 In the sixth form there are good procedures to assess students' progress and to monitor their academic performance. The real strength of these procedures lies in the amount of information, the quality of it and the way that the head of sixth form has an overview of how it can be used to target certain groups of students. For example, information is used well to identify students at risk of under-performing and these students are then carefully supervised and counselled through their tutor. This has led to improved results at A-level. The weakness again lies at departmental level where with a few exceptions such as history, the messages are not always sufficiently reinforced. Students are, nevertheless, given advice in their reports on how to improve within subjects and individual pieces of work are usually well marked with helpful comments. Students are offered the choice of vocational qualifications or A-level subjects in the sixth form according to their needs, preferences and previous performance. In individual subjects teachers make use of assessment information to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of the students.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

- 69 Students' pastoral and personal development in the sixth form is supported well by a pastoral system in which tutors play a key role. Effective procedures are in place for the monitoring of students' academic progress involving subject teachers, tutors and, with discussion, students. These are carried out during the academic year and, if appropriate, parents are invited into school to discuss progress. This process has proved successful and is reflected in the improved examination results. A social education programme and a general studies course support students' personal development. Time is also allocated during tutor time to cover study skills and cross-curricular themes. These arrangements put a lot of pressure on the limited time available in tutor periods. During the inspection some tutors made better use of the time than others and students sometimes used the time for chatting together rather than following one of the themes identified for the week. Tutors and the head of sixth form know the students well and also provide sensitive and effective personal support.
- 70 Students' good motivation to follow their chosen courses means that unsatisfactory attitudes or behaviour are almost unknown. The tutorial system is well structured to respond to any such problems that do emerge. Similarly the good monitoring system that includes incentives for attendance, as well as tracking academic progress and coverage of careers, contributes to the good attendance levels. There is suitable follow-up both with students and with their parents in the few instances where individual attendance becomes unsatisfactory.
- 71 Students receive advice on what they might do after the sixth form through discussions with school staff and in consultation with the external careers service. This service has recently had to reduce the amount of time it makes available to the school and this has left many students feeling inadequately supported. The school has taken steps to remedy the situation and found ways of enhancing the level of support available so that students now receive a good level of support.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

- 72 The school is popular in its locality, with more applications for Year 7 than there are places available. Satisfactory links are developed with parents, and there is a good sense of partnership with sixth form students. Parents who express a view are generally happy with the way teachers expect pupils to work and help them to make progress with their learning. They appreciate the way that staff are helpful if they want to talk about any queries or problems. A significant proportion of questionnaires pick up on the fact that there are parents who would like a closer partnership with the school, for instance through more information about their children's progress. However, a large minority of other parents are content to have little involvement with their children's learning. They miss opportunities to find out more about the work of the school, when they choose to stay away from the meetings arranged every year for them to discuss their children's progress with teachers.
- 73 General information available to parents is good. Newsletters include a lively spread of material about school events and concerns. The prospectus is attractive and informative, and the governors' annual report also covers a suitable range of topics, for instance reflecting recent changes and improvements in provision for

pupils with special educational needs. Annual reports, together with the interim assessments also sent home during the course of the year, remain helpful as they were at the time of the previous inspection. They generally give parents a good amount of information about the work pupils do, what they have learnt and how they can make further progress. They are best in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Those for younger pupils are helpful so far as they go, but it would be easier for parents to see just how their child is doing if details about progress and attainment were linked more closely to national expectations.

- 74 In the sixth form, there is a whole range of good information available to students about their achievements in addition to that in their official reports, so that they have ample opportunity to become involved as partners in their own learning. Pupils' homework diaries give parents the chance to monitor the homework they do. However, routines for teachers to make sure these diaries are used regularly and for checking that parents have seen and signed them are not always followed.
- 75 The school has good relationships with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are kept well informed at all stages of their children's education. There are also good and generally successful efforts to gain parents' understanding and support over problems with behaviour. A few parents are unhelpful over concerns about poor attendance.
- 76 The parent teacher association relies for its success on a small but enthusiastic group of parents. It contributes by helping every year with the running costs of the school minibus, as well as by helping various subject areas to purchase extra resources when the response to its fund-raising efforts allows this. In addition the school welcomes relevant assistance from individual parents, resulting, for instance, in the implementation of a very successful computerised database for managing the books in the school library.
- 77 Sixth form students are appreciative of the provision made for them and most of them feel happy that it meets their needs. Aspects that they rate most highly in their questionnaires and in conversation are:
- the induction process that helps them settle well to this next stage of their lives;
  - the good teaching that challenges them to work and to make progress;
  - the way teachers are readily accessible for help;
  - the expectations that they should study independently, and the help they get to do this;
  - the high quality of the facilities available at the school.
- 78 There is more uncertainty on a few points; for instance, at least one in five has doubts about how much the school responds to students' views, whether they are treated as being responsible and the range of activities available.
- 79 Although in general students feel their work is thoroughly assessed, a considerable number are comparatively less enthusiastic regarding information about their progress. A significant number also record reservations about the quality of advice, including both advice about future options and help with personal problems, available to them. Inspectors agree with students' positive views but conclude that their reservations link in part to the relatively short time that Year 12 students had experienced in the sixth form before completing their questionnaires, rather than to any real concerns about deficiency in provision.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED

- 80 The headteacher took up her post in September and has already made a significant impact. She has made an accurate appraisal of the school's current situation, analysed its strengths and weaknesses and determined how it should move forward. The senior management team and other staff are responding well to her strong leadership and the school is well placed to move forwards.
- 81 The previous inspection found the school to be very well led and managed. Parents agree with this and the school has a strong reputation locally. Management has placed a strong emphasis on the pastoral care of pupils and this is reflected in the composition of the senior management team in which most people have largely pastoral responsibilities. The school has recognised that its performance at GCSE has begun to slip behind that of other schools and has sought reasons in pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour. Considerable efforts have been made to improve these, with some success, but there has been too little analysis of features within the school itself, such as the curriculum, timetabling arrangements and teaching, which also affect pupils' performance and shape their attitudes to learning. This has been an important misjudgement and, although many aspects of the school are well organised, overall leadership has been satisfactory.
- 82 Staff with pastoral responsibilities carry out their work well. They know the pupils well and provide sensitive and effective general support. This is not as strongly linked to monitoring and encouraging their academic progress as in many schools. Pupils' performance at the end of primary school and in standardised tests is recorded and is beginning to be used to keep an eye on individuals to see that they are making the expected progress, but this is still at an early stage. Some subject departments contribute to the data while others do not, so it is not possible to judge a pupil's overall progress and no one has the clear responsibility for doing this.
- 83 Considerable management time and energy was absorbed at the end of last year by the struggle to replace 22 staff, many more than usually leave the school each year. About half of these vacancies, mainly the posts with additional responsibilities, were filled in the normal ways, but to complete its staffing the school had to use recruitment agencies and bring in teachers from abroad. Many of these have settled in very successfully but others, who are used to a school system often very different from that in England, are needing more support.
- 84 The distraction caused by the difficulty in recruiting staff last year and the relatively large number of part-time teachers has also contributed to the very unusual timetabling arrangements where most classes have more than one teacher for many subjects. As described in the teaching and learning section, paragraph 21, this reduces the impact of good teaching, making relationships harder to establish and breaking up pupils' learning.
- 85 Far less systematic use is made of performance information in the rest of the school than in the sixth form. In some departments, such as physical education, it is strong and contributes well to pupils' progress, but others make too little use of the information and have not been persuaded of its value. Many departments are generally well managed. Several heads of departments monitor work in their departments, visiting lessons and examining pupils' work, but there has been little follow-up to the information gathering part of the process. In several departments,

notably science, the head of department has had to devote a great deal of time and effort to coping with staffing difficulties.

- 86 Since the appointment of the current head of learning support 12 months ago, improvements have been made in raising the profile of provision for pupils with special educational needs. The role of learning support assistants has been promoted in the classroom and their attendance at department meetings provides valuable support for teachers and pupils. The school is aware of the need to provide ongoing professional development for staff working within the learning support department. The designated governor has made a significant contribution to support these changes. The learning support unit is very well led.
- 87 Members of the governing body are very committed to the school and take their role seriously. They meet regularly as a full governing body and also have a committee structure to consider issues such as the budget, curriculum and staffing in more detail. They are kept well informed and have a detailed overview of the school's finances. This has enabled them to allocate funds wisely and improve the school's level of resources. The information they have received about other aspects of the school has been less detailed and so they have not been able to compare the school's performance with that of other similar schools. Preparation for the recent appointment of a new headteacher has alerted them to many of the issues facing the school and they are well placed to help it move forwards. Governors have ensured that all statutory requirements, apart from the provision of daily worship, are met.
- 88 Routine administration and financial management remain strong, as at the previous inspection. There is effective organisation, underpinned by careful planning, to ensure that school routines operate effectively on a day-to-day basis, and also that events, such as open days, run smoothly. Appropriate attention has been given to the few concerns raised in the most recent auditors' report. The bursar ensures that the senior management team and governors are fully informed of the financial implications when they debate and determine the school's priorities for development. Spending is then suitably linked to the agreed priorities for development. However, the good procedures for evaluation and review noted at the previous inspection have since not been applied consistently enough to monitor the impact of spending decisions. Discontinuities in leadership, due to illness, have intervened. Some improvements are nevertheless evident. In the area of learning resources high but well-judged expenditure contributes to the way resources are now overall good, having been only just adequate at the previous inspection. A good climate for ongoing review has been established in this respect. When heads of departments made their most recent bids for funding for resources, they were asked to evaluate the outcomes of last year's spending before submitting their bids for the next 12 months' allocation. In other important respects evaluation is unsatisfactory. For instance, over the past two and a half years governors have agreed a significant allocation to fund a three-year project for step-by-step improvements in the staff/pupil ratio at Key Stage 3. The intention was to remedy weaknesses identified three years ago in the attainment of pupils joining the school. Governors are now preparing to evaluate this initiative. Little interim indication of whether or not it is succeeding has so far been identified during the routine monitoring carried out by staff and governors. While this Key Stage 3 project has appropriate aims of eventually improving behaviour and learning throughout the school, issues around the attainment of pupils currently in Key Stage 4, though

recognised, have been relatively neglected. This is a significant factor inhibiting increases in A\*-C grades at GCSE.

- 89 Good steps are taken to obtain and use specific grants. For instance, the school was recently able to identify generated income as matched funding for a grant on offer from the local education authority. This enabled the installation of a new telephone system and data network across the site, to benefit both staff and pupils. Good use is made of new technology to aid in administration and in pastoral records. Its use for amassing and using assessment data is satisfactory. There is effective use to gain a broad picture of pupils' capabilities, but the potential of computerised systems as a tool to examine the detail of what pupils know and can do, so as to aid precision in planning for their next stages in learning, is not thoroughly exploited.
- 90 There is overall satisfactory consideration of the principles of best value. Appropriate reference is made to the views of parents and pupils, as well as of staff, when considering possible developments. For instance, the views of pupils and students were taken into account during the recent selection of the new headteacher. Very good features of financial planning are seen in the way there was careful consideration of the school's needs and to obtaining best value when, with able guidance from the bursar, governors recently entered into an innovative contract for premises and catering services. Governors and senior staff take satisfactory steps to compare the school's test and examination results with those obtained by others in the locality and nationally. However, the next stage, of identifying challenging targets for improvement, does not focus closely enough on teaching and learning. It tends to be a wish list rather than a reasoned judgement of what can and will be achieved by well-focused efforts. This in turn means that although there is a good degree of shared willingness to bring about improvements, energies are not directed to best effect. Expenditure per pupil is very high in the main school, compared with the average seen in other schools. Taking into account all the aspects of the provision made for pupils and the outcomes, including the good level of care, but also the way a significant minority of pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve less than expected, the main school is providing satisfactory value for money.
- 91 Overall, provision of teaching and non-teaching staff is satisfactory. In the sixth form it is good. The school has experienced considerable difficulties in recruitment recently and some 22 new staff took up posts at the beginning of the school year. There remains a small number of vacancies, some of which are shortly to be filled. Most departments have enough suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. The match of specialist staff to curriculum is at least satisfactory in science, and in religious education, ICT, design and technology, art and physical education it is good, though there are some specialism shortages within art. A number of departments like mathematics, geography and history have to rely on non-specialist staff drawn from other subject departments to supplement their provision. In modern foreign languages one non-specialist is teaching German. In English, there are sufficient specialists but far too many classes which are taught by more than one teacher. These split classes also affect several other subjects of the curriculum. The school therefore does not deploy its teaching staff efficiently.
- 92 The school has satisfactory procedures in place for the induction of staff new to the school. Newly qualified staff receive sufficient time allocated for their professional

development; are regularly observed teaching and have written targets for improvement. There is a good performance management system in place, which includes regular observation of teaching and the identification of individual staff development needs. Priorities for staff development are reviewed annually to support the school development plan and school-based training days are used effectively to support these priorities. Procedures for short-term evaluation of training are in place but longer-term evaluation of its impact on teaching and learning has yet to be developed.

- 93 Accommodation is good overall, with many very good features and a few needing attention. The buildings, all on one site, are attractive with woodland surroundings. Outstanding features are the very good facilities for sport and physical education and for performing arts; from these the school earns income through lettings. The physical grouping of dance, drama and music in a purpose-built suite is a great asset to that curriculum area. The library is excellent, centrally placed and with electronic security. Accommodation for art, business studies and computer technology is also very good. In all other areas it is good. All curriculum areas have rooms for staff to gather and work, including learning support assistants. In some areas there is a separate, smaller room for sixth form students' lessons and private study. There is good quality storage everywhere, particularly in science. Display space is sufficient and is used particularly well in geography. There are some limitations: in English, mathematics, science, history and design and technology, large classes in the lower school have led to cramped conditions in some rooms; noise intrusion sometimes affects work in geography and modern foreign languages; more window blinds are needed in geography and computer technology rooms. In design and technology and art rooms, all the windows are unsafe and are to be replaced as a high priority. While the provision of social spaces outside is very good, including some covered storage for pupils' bicycles, inside the buildings only the sixth form and Year 11 have designated rooms. In wet weather, there is too little covered space for pupils to use during breaks from lessons. Site staff have built one area for sandwich eaters, among other alterations and repairs. Management of maintenance and security, together with catering, is under contract to a private company. This system, described by the school as 'unique', works well. The contract is long-term with regular reviews.
- 94 The provision of resources is mainly good. This marks an improvement since the last inspection. The seven functioning computer rooms offer a very good facility, though some subjects, art and geography for example, are still poorly equipped and do not have the software to develop their curriculum with ICT. The school library provides an excellent resource for learning, supported by well-trained staff, an attractive and welcoming space and a clear plan for development. Book borrowing and the catalogue are fully computerised and pupils help with the day-to-day administration. Reading is promoted by regular visits from children's authors.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

- 95 The school's management arrangements have allowed the head of sixth form considerable autonomy and encouraged him to be innovative. Four years ago results in the sixth form were low. An analysis of the students' capabilities and past performance convinced the head of sixth form that they should be higher. He began making very systematic use of performance data, involving all tutors and

teachers appropriately to build up a profile for each student. Students themselves are closely involved in appraising their performance and working with tutors to set specific targets for improvement. As a result results have risen markedly and are now above the national average. Other issues contributing to the students' personal development, such as their involvement with younger pupils and discussion of current affairs, are not neglected and overall management of the sixth form is very good.

### **Resources**

- 96 The head of sixth form makes good reference to the principles of best value in the deployment of available financial resources. The curriculum is well considered so that it achieves a good balance between meeting students' individual needs in an equitable way and maintaining suitable breadth to meet the needs of the students who enrol. For instance, the option of a modern foreign language is continued, as being relevant in today's world, even though there is at present relatively low demand for this. Good practice and flexibility to meet new demands is seen in the way the head of sixth form regularly canvassed the views of Year 12 AS students during 2000-2001 about their preferences for A-level courses in 2001-2002. Both income and expenditure per student follow the usual pattern of being higher than for pupils elsewhere in the school. Costs are largely covered by the income received in respect of sixth form students. A slight cross-subsidy from main school funds is amply justified by the standards of provision and the consequent examples of good practice achieved for other parts of the school. The generous funding is used successfully to provide for students' needs. They make good progress both academically and in their personal development. Good standards of attainment are maintained from year to year. Post-16 provision is therefore cost-effective and represents good value for money.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 97 In order to raise standards and the quality of education further, staff and governors should:
- (1) Improve the progress that pupils make in the main school and particularly increase the number who achieve higher grades at GCSE. This is likely to be achieved by:
    - focusing management time and effort at all levels on raising pupils' performance
    - making more effective use of assessment information to raise standards
    - greatly reducing the number of classes who have the teaching of a subject shared between more than one teacher
    - introduce more alternatives to GCSE courses to meet the needs of more pupils in Years 10 and 11.  
(See paragraphs 8, 21, 32, 66, 67, and 81-85)
  - (2) Improve the motivation of a few pupils who disrupt lessons particularly in Years 8 and 9. Many of the issues listed above will impact on this issue.

The school should also reduce the number of lessons in which pupils are not actively enough involved, ensuring that all teaching is purposeful and effective.

(See paragraphs 12, 22, 24, 104, 117, 120, 167, and 193)

- (3) Reduce the amount of time that pupils lose through absence, continuing with the procedures currently in place and raising parents' awareness of the importance of their children's regular attendance.  
(See paragraphs 17 and 65)

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Improve the use of tutor time so that it is consistently worthwhile  
(See paragraphs 51 and 69)

In addition to these points, the school should look for ways of meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	171
	Sixth form	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		42

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	2	34	64	57	11	3	0
Percentage	1	20	37	33	6	2	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	6	25	11	1	0	0
Percentage	4	13	56	24	2	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 here as each lesson represents more than two percentage points. Percentages in the sixth form do not add up to 100 because they are each rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1206	164
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	82	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	274	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	29

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	67

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	120	135	255

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	75	82	74
	Girls	105	92	86
	Total	180	174	160
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (56)	68 (54)	63 (54)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (26)	41 (34)	30 (22)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	79	67
	Girls	73	95	85
	Total	112	174	152
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (39)	68 (59)	60 (54)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (13)	49 (35)	26 (21)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	127	116	243

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	37	120	120
	Girls	48	107	109
	Total	85	227	229
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35 (32)	93 (93)	94 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35 (35)
	National	38.4 (38)

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
	National	n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	29	24	53

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.4	16.9	17.2	2.2	3.6	2.9
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	76.5

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	n/a
	National	n/a

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	5
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	1338
Any other minority ethnic group	15

### **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	114	9
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 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	79.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.4

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	588

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	22.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000 - 01
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	£
Total income	3758443
Total expenditure	3824041
Expenditure per pupil	2711
Balance brought forward from previous year	108348
Balance carried forward to next year	42750

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	36.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22.62

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1370
Number of questionnaires returned	323

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	25	54	13	3	4
My child is making good progress in school.	23	57	7	0	13
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	53	14	1	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	57	18	2	8
The teaching is good.	23	57	6	0	14
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	45	21	3	15
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	47	5	2	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	47	2	1	6
The school works closely with parents.	15	46	21	2	15
The school is well led and managed.	25	50	3	1	20
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	59	7	1	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	47	5	2	19

### Other issues raised by parents

Twenty-two parents added comments to their questionnaires to amplify their views. A number wanted to be more involved in the school and to receive more information. Several stressed how well the school helps pupils in Year7 to settle in.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good: planning and preparation of lessons is very thorough and teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is good.
- Most pupils are well motivated and eager to learn.
- Relationships are positive.
- The standard of speaking and listening is above that found nationally.
- The subject is well managed and good progress has been made since the last inspection.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in GCSE need to improve.
- The number of classes shared by teaching needs to be reduced to a minimum.
- More specialist support is required in groups with a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs.

99 Pupils' standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is in line with that found nationally. In national tests in 2000 the percentage of pupils reaching at least Level 5 was above the national average. Pupils' average points score was close to the national average. Boys did better than girls when compared with their respective national figures. When compared with similar schools, results were well below average. There has been a steady upward trend over recent years and progress has been good since the last inspection, but results in 2001 were less good than those in 2000. Considering that levels of literacy of their cohort were only average on entry, sound progress has been made by the end of Year 9. Standards have improved since the last report.

100 The standard of attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with that found nationally. In the GCSE in 2000 for English language the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was slightly below the national average but pupils' average points score was in line. Results in English literature were below the national average. In English language pupils did better than they do in the majority of subjects, but in literature they did marginally worse. Boys and girls did roughly the same when compared with their national averages. Performance in 2001 was better in literature but less good in language than in 2000, although results were below the national average. Overall, standards are not as high as they should be at GCSE.

101 Pupils throughout the main school listen attentively. The quality of speaking and listening is higher than that found nationally. Most high and average attaining pupils speak fluently and audibly but a number of lower attaining pupils do not speak

clearly and do not think out precisely what they want to say. Pupils work productively in pairs and small groups. A high attaining class in Year 11, for example, working in groups, explored a poet's style and technique in a mature, collaborative way. By the end of Year 11 the great majority of pupils use the spoken form of standard English. The majority of pupils answer questions willingly and articulately. They read aloud well, and communicate meaning effectively using a variety of pitch, pace and intonation. High attaining pupils in Year 10 presented lively short radio programmes based upon the recent poetry day. The best presentations were of a high standard with brisk, stylish use of language and sensitive poetry reading. There has been a marked improvement in oral work since the last inspection.

- 102 Attainment in reading is in line with that found nationally. The overall standard of reading comprehension throughout the main school is average and enables people to enjoy a wide range of literary and non-literary texts. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 study set novels in considerable depth. High attaining pupils in Year 7, for example, understood imaginatively the deeper meanings in their novel and were enthusiastic in speculating about possible alternative outcomes for the plot. Most pupils read aloud easily and accurately but some lower attaining pupils read falteringly and fail to make good sense of sentences. By the end of Year 9, pupils accurately analyse the sequence of events in plays and novels, and learn to interpret characters and their motives. During Years 10 and 11 pupils develop a mature understanding of works of literature and accurately use the appropriate language of literary appreciation. Good use is made of the excellent library. The recent visit of a well-known writer for children stimulated much interest and enthusiasm.
- 103 The standard of written work is average overall. It is generally neatly presented. Most pupils draft their work effectively, as is shown in the quality of completed work in folders. Some low attaining pupils enjoy using storyboards and cartoon formats to assist their writing. They do, however, make frequent errors with sentence structure and expression of ideas, as well as spelling and punctuation. Much lively and interesting written work is displayed in classrooms. Many pupils use word processing to enhance the appearance of their work. High attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce completed assignments of well above average quality. Much of the best is in response to the study of literature and in personal, reflective pieces. Such writing is carefully planned, fluently expressed and technically accurate in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Throughout the main school pupils write attractive and imaginative poetry, some of which appears in the departmental magazine. A larger collection of poems is also published and pupils regularly enter poetry competitions.
- 104 Almost all pupils throughout the main school are well motivated and eager to learn. The overall standard of behaviour is good. A small minority of boys and girls do, however, lose concentration occasionally and their behaviour adversely affects the learning of others. Relationships are, on the whole, mutually respectful. Pupils of all levels of attainment behave well and respond positively to challenging teaching. In a few classes, however, where the majority of pupils have special educational needs and there is no additional support, even with committed and caring teaching pupils make very slow progress. Many pupils, especially in Year 7, actively enjoy learning and bring energy and good humour to lessons. Most pupils listen courteously to others when they are reading aloud and show respect for different ideas and opinions.

- 105 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Up to the end of Year 9 it is good or better in over half of the lessons. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good or better in over three-quarters of lessons and pupils learn well. Lessons are planned and prepared very thoroughly. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is extensive and detailed. Classroom management is generally sound and relationships are positive and productive. The content of lessons is carefully matched to pupils' level of attainment. Teachers use questioning skilfully to draw the best out of pupils. In the best lessons, tasks are clear, targets are set and kept, a stimulating range of language activities is used, pupils are appropriately challenged and finally, progress is reviewed. Satisfactory use is made of ICT. The few less successful lessons start untidily, pupils lose concentration, and teachers talk for too long. Pupils' work is marked consistently and constructively with helpful comments, and targets are set for improvement.
- 106 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Departmental documentation is thorough and informative. Responsibilities are efficiently delegated. Schemes of work have been reviewed and the National Literacy Strategy has been effectively incorporated. Almost all classes are shared by at least two teachers and some by as many as four. Some teachers meet a class only once a week. Continuity and progress are adversely affected despite the conscientious efforts of staff to work closely together. There is a well-appointed suite of rooms but a significant number of staff teach in rooms elsewhere in the campus. These are both timetabling issues. Teaching is monitored regularly. All staff have high expectations of pupils at all levels of attainment. High attaining pupils especially are rigorously challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are taught with sensitivity and care, but there is not enough support in classes with a high percentage of such pupils. Relationships within the department are supportive and purposeful. Staff share the same concerns and aspirations for pupils and organise an imaginative range of extra-curricular activities. The department is well led and managed.
- 107 In most other subjects across the curriculum pupils listen attentively. The quality of speech is higher than that commonly encountered. In certain subjects such as history and music, careful attention is given to the development of oracy. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and to answer questions fully and fluently. Drama and role-play are skilfully used in history. The importance of speaking and listening is also emphasised in geography, religious education and physical education. In some curriculum areas planned talk and discussion are not employed as an essential way of broadening understanding and learning.
- 108 The reading comprehension of the great majority of pupils is adequate for them to understand their textbooks and other printed material. Key words are displayed in classrooms in some subjects such as music, and specific vocabulary is listed in sketchbooks in art. Good use is made of the library as a resource for extending learning.
- 109 Written work is, on the whole, carefully presented in most subjects. In music pupils sensitively evaluate their listening using full sentences. Extended writing skills are developed from Year 7 in history, and essay writing is taught systematically in Year 10 and 11. Pupils' performance in examinations is affected by errors in sentence structure, punctuation and spelling. The introduction of the strategy for literacy across the curriculum at Key Stage 3 has begun, but it is at an early stage.

## **Drama**

- 110 As well as contributing to the curriculum for the performing arts a GCSE programme in drama is offered as a discrete option in Years 10 and 11.
- 111 Overall standards of attainment are somewhat below those found nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in the GCSE in 2000 was below the national average as was the average points score. Results in 2001 showed a significant improvement.
- 112 Work seen in Year 10 was close to standards found nationally. There is a wide range of levels of attainment in the class. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress with high attaining pupils. Pupils collaborate well in small groups. They listen attentively to each other and share ideas with patience and tolerance. When presenting their work pupils showed some skills close to expected levels, such as good use of body language, facial expression and gesture. Less good was the lack of awareness of the audience and the inability of some pupils to stay in role for any length of time. Pupils in Year 11 showed humour and empathy when working in pairs but could not sustain their roles for long enough. Their improvised dialogue was lively, but movement and sense of the audience was poor.
- 113 Teaching is uniformly good. Work is thoroughly prepared and relationships are positive. Discipline in the studio is good and pupils are clear about what is expected. There is mutual respect and trust. Pupils are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Organisation of the subject is good and the course is managed with great energy and enthusiasm.

## MATHEMATICS

- 114 Overall, provision is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2000 were broadly in line with national averages. This was maintained in 2001.
- Standards of attainment in lessons in Years 10 and 11 are an improvement on recent GCSE results.
- Teaching is often good or very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils is good with the majority of teachers.
- The department is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment in Year 9 lessons are below national expectations.
- Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations have been consistently below the national averages in recent years.
- Teaching is too often unsatisfactory or poor, particularly in Year 9.
- Lessons lack continuity because the majority of classes have at least two teachers. This makes assessment of individual pupils difficult.
- Good practice in teaching should be shared with those teachers new to the school

and the English system of education.

- Whilst resources overall are adequate, the majority of pupils are not allowed to take textbooks home. The use of computer software to enhance learning is underdeveloped.

- 115 In 2000, the proportions of pupils in Year 9 attaining level 5 or above and level 6 or above in National Curriculum tests were broadly in line with their national averages respectively. Overall, standards were below those in similar schools. This shows a steady improvement in recent years. Results in 2001 were again in line with national averages. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Results are broadly in line with those in English and science. In lessons seen, standards were lower than they should be in Year 9, although they are broadly in line with national expectation in Year 7 and 8. There has been no improvement since the previous inspection.
- 116 In 2000, the proportion of pupils in Year 11 attaining grades A\*-C was below the national average, whilst the proportion attaining grades A\*-G was broadly in line. However, these results reversed a decline that reached a low point in 1999. The improvement continued in 2001, although the proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C was still below the national average. Although still slightly below national expectation, standards seen in lessons show that attainment towards the end of compulsory schooling continues to improve. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In recent years, pupils in mathematics have not obtained results as high as in most other subjects, but there is a clear trend that the gap is narrowing. However, there has been no improvement since the last inspection.
- 117 By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils are able to solve simultaneous equations. The best show a good understanding of why their methods work, but some are unsure how to eliminate one of the unknown quantities. Some, otherwise higher attaining pupils, struggle to calculate easy percentages mentally, although they demonstrate an understanding of how to calculate profit and loss as a percentage of cost price using a calculator. A significant number show little confidence or initiative when given a different starting point, such as determining cost price from selling price and percentage profit. Whilst lessons are well structured and learning objectives clear, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to show initiative as a matter of course in most lessons. Average attaining pupils calculate percentages accurately and enlarge or reduce quantities in given proportions. Too many of these, however, work in a rote fashion and show little interest in their work. They spend time chatting idly making little or no progress. Some attempt simultaneous equations, but find it difficult to follow the work because other pupils are too noisy. Too many teachers in Year 9 are not only new to the school, but new to the education system in this country. Many pupils take the opportunity to waste time and often ignore their teachers. Lower attaining pupils, including many with special educational needs, show a sound understanding of length conversions. However, not all of these pupils appreciate the reasons for using different units or estimate the length of the room or school corridor accurately. Overall, standards at the end of Year 9 are below national expectation. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory.
- 118 Pupils in Year 7 and 8 make better progress. Progress is better in Year 7, where teachers focus clearly on the learning objectives for each lesson. Pupils are keen to learn, show considerable perseverance, work very well together and relish a challenge. In a very good lesson with lower attaining pupils in Year 7, the teacher's

well-timed and varied activities motivated pupils to learn about measurement and perimeter by relating tasks to themselves and their classroom. Pairs of pupils, usually a boy and girl, worked in harmony to measure, for example, their heights and finger lengths. They calculated perimeters when shapes were rectangles. Transitions were sharp and the lesson ended with pupils individually drawing their own shapes on squared paper to test their ability to measure perimeter. A useful plenary saw pupils relating what they had learned.

- 119 In most lessons in Years 7 and 8, pupils progress well because most teachers are experienced and have high expectations, but because of the problems in Year 9 teaching at this stage is unsatisfactory. They use starter activities to interest pupils and aim the work at the correct level. In the majority of lessons, learning objectives are met. There is often learning support in lessons and assistants work well with teachers to target individuals with special educational needs. In a very good lesson, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 produced questionnaires that were well constructed and well presented using ICT. They also determined formulae for numbers in sequences. They worked hard because they are motivated from the very start of the lesson by the teacher's 'mental madness' quick-fire written test on tables. They marked each other's efforts sensibly and accurately and recorded their marks. The teacher's determination to establish this routine has worked well and pupils showed clear signs of taking a real responsibility for their own learning. Despite being new to the system of education, this teacher has adapted rapidly to capturing the imagination of pupils by using varied activities, timing them to maintain pace in lessons and setting high standards for behaviour and attainment.
- 120 In some lessons in Years 7 and 8, however, the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory. This only occurs when teachers are new to this education system. After only a few weeks, most of these teachers, though clearly not all, are as yet unable to manage pupils satisfactorily. Lessons taken by other teachers are at least satisfactory and are usually good or better. However, time is wasted in many lessons, because some teachers have a class only once a fortnight and there are many other split group arrangements. Although teachers adapt as well as possible, continuity in learning is hindered. Teaching is not effective enough in Years 7 to 9 and pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in Year 9.
- 121 Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 calculate the areas of compound shapes including those involving the areas of sectors of circles. A significant number, however, can only guess at methods to calculate the angle of a sector when told the area and the radius. This is because they are used to working through topics one way without exploring inverse methods or using estimation to help assess whether an answer is reasonable or not. Average attaining pupils understand the relation between graphs and algebraic equations. In a good lesson with Year 11 pupils, the majority tabulated values accurately for linear algebraic equations and drew the graphs. The teacher's approach of inviting individual pupils to the board to tabulate values and then to draw graphs worked well. A team spirit developed amongst the class and they actively supported and offered help to the pupil at the board. Meaningful discussion took place spontaneously. The teacher also motivated the pupils by informing them that this would lead to plotting graphs of the quadratic functions they had recently been studying. Although more use could have been made of relating the equations to real-life situations, purposeful learning took place because pupils knew the objective clearly. They were given a real opportunity to play their part in the success of the lesson because the teacher skilfully guided them to solutions

rather than leading too much. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11, including many with special educational needs, find patterns in numbers and diagrams. Whilst most are not able to express their findings in a formula, they use their own methods to determine numbers and drawings, even when these are a long way into a sequence. Energetic teaching, quality worksheets, allowing pupils to experiment and informing them that some of the questions are from public examinations, motivates and gives pupils opportunities for a depth of understanding. Some lower attaining pupils in Year 11 show little awareness of how to construct questionnaires. This occurs when teachers have not yet adapted to teaching in this education system. Standards are almost in line with national expectations in Year 11. It is only the higher attaining pupils who are not level with their counterparts nationally. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory.

- 122 Progress is at least satisfactory for the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 and is often good. Teaching is good at this stage and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Pupils benefit from more experienced teachers and continuity is better than in earlier years because pupils learn effectively and many classes have only one teacher. Teachers usually have high expectations and the most able are suitably challenged in Year 10. Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost always at least satisfactory and often good or very good. There are good relationships with teachers. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 123 Leadership and management of the department are good, but external circumstances, such as staffing difficulties and the allocation of teachers to classes, has made it difficult to drive up standards sufficiently. The head of department has worked tirelessly to support the new teachers and whilst there has been progress with all teachers new to the English system of education, it will be some time before all are competent enough to teach satisfactory lessons regularly. Recruitment has been difficult. The numeracy strategy is developing and there are many teachers with suitable responsibility posts for mathematics within the department. Assessment and target setting, however, are not sharp enough to motivate pupils sufficiently and to give them clear guidance for improvement. Whilst pupils are often given opportunities to explain their answers orally, there is insufficient attention given to allowing them to write down ideas, estimates or hypotheses. There are too many teachers in the department. Training together is difficult because many teachers of mathematics have senior management positions in the school, including the head of department. Whilst all of these are good teachers, they share classes with other teachers leading to a lack of continuity mainly in the early years of school. Although resources are generally adequate, there is some sharing of textbooks and some pupils are not able to take textbooks home. Insufficient use is made of ICT as the department's computer system needs upgrading. Accommodation is good.

## **Numeracy**

- 124 Whilst the mathematics department has a statement of aims for its numeracy policy, this relates to what the department will attempt to do. There is currently no audit of how or when numeracy is used across the curriculum. Within the mathematics department some useful strategies have been adopted as starters to lessons, often involving the use of question and answer cards, tables tests, or counting in fractions such as three-quarters. However, these occasionally lack pace and a greater variety of starter activities, involving whole classes, actively needs to be explored.

The training received, however, has led to a greater awareness of the need to teach numeracy to all pupils at suitably challenging levels. This needs to be developed.

- 125 In other curriculum areas there is no evidence of a lack of numeracy skills hindering pupils' progress. In geography, significant use is made of converting statistical information from tables into graphical form. Bar graphs of populations are drawn and interpreted well. Scatter graphs are used to extrapolate information and Year 10 pupils use algebraic formulae to estimate areas of flooding. Year 8 pupils in science, studying the solar system, draw graphs of the size of planets against their distance from the sun. Year 9 pupils use algebraic formulae during ICT lessons when devising spreadsheets. In design and technology, pupils of all ages measure accurately and in Years 10 and 11, pupils analyse research findings in graphical and tabular form for use in GCSE projects. Numeracy skills are developed in measuring and timing activities in physical education. This is well planned in this department's scheme of work.
- 126 Although there is some incidental numeracy taught in art when looking at patterns and gradations in the work of Escher, opportunities to emphasise numeracy are lost. There is little use of numeracy in history, religious education, modern foreign languages, music or English. Overall, standards of numeracy are satisfactory and often better in Years 7 and 8. However, the good practice shown in some departments needs to be shared with others. This will allow departments to maximise opportunities to teach numeracy and to use these skills to enhance learning within all subject areas.

## SCIENCE

- 127 The overall provision for science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching, including teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge and relationship with and care of pupils.
- Accommodation with a majority of modern laboratories and good resources.
- Organisation and management of the department.

### Areas for improvement

- Clearer targets for pupils, linked to assessments.
- Range of teaching strategies, for example insufficient use of ICT to enhance learning.

- 128 Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations and in 2000 they were a little higher than the other core subjects within the school. They have shown some improvement in recent years. Boys and girls achieve about the same. Standards reached in the work seen and science lessons are close to national averages with high achieving Year 8 pupils able to explain a solar eclipse and middle ability Year 9 pupils able to prepare salts with good practical technique and due regard to safety. Work is generally presented well and marking helps pupils to improve their science knowledge as well as supporting pupils' development of literacy skills.

- 129 GCSE results for double award science are on a par with national averages for boys and slightly below for girls. The small number of pupils who take separate science GCSE achieve in line with national averages. Standards reached in science lessons and in pupils' work are in line with national norms. High ability Year 10 pupils discuss the factors affecting energy conversion efficiency and a lower ability Year 11 class was able to plan and carry out an investigation of the effect of concentration on the rate of a chemical reaction successfully. Most pupils continue to produce well-presented work and teachers' comments remain supportive.
- 130 The quality of teaching is good overall with few unsatisfactory lessons and several good and very good ones. Teachers are enthusiastic, have a good command of their subject and have a good relationship with pupils. Pupils generally respond well to this and show good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The quality of explanation and questioning was a strength of many lessons. Where lessons were less satisfactory teachers were not clear about the specific learning objectives for that lesson and therefore were unable to communicate them to pupils.
- 131 Although there are comprehensive schemes of work for all years these do not always specify learning objectives in enough detail, for example specifying what all, most and some pupils will be expected to learn. Some do not make detailed enough reference to opportunities to develop practical skills or to use brief practical work or demonstrations to illustrate a concept or idea. Consequently, in several lessons seen there was too much reliance on explanation and questioning and although this was good in itself pupils' practical skills and grasp of the subject were not developed enough. More use could also be made of audiovisual resources, particularly in lessons where practical work is not possible. Insufficient use was made of ICT, particularly in experimental work, and this seems related in part to a lack of resources in the science laboratories. Where pupils were engaged in practical work they were encouraged to predict and to consider accuracy as well as the safety and effectiveness of their plans.
- 132 Assessment of pupils' progress and potential is well developed. Each pupil has a record of test and other assessment results in their exercise books and teachers have data on each pupil from standardised tests. However, more day-to-day use could be made of this data to make pupils more aware of their overall targets and to provide a context within which shorter-term targets could be regularly set. Pupils' work is marked regularly with grades and comments. More could be made of the comments in order to suggest ways to improve by referring to specific learning targets.
- 133 There is good provision for enrichment of science with out-of-school activities including a science club, which has regularly entered and won national competitions and regular visits by teaching groups to venues such as the Science Museum and London Zoo
- 134 Accommodation and resources are good, as is technical support. The main suites of laboratories are under ten years old and are in very good condition with an excellent central preparation area. Three laboratories are located away from the others and, although these are in a reasonable state of repair with services working, they are old and cramped when a class of 30 pupils does practical work in them. All laboratories are improved by good displays, often featuring pupils' work, which encourages them to produce good quality writing.

- 135 The department is well managed with regular, formal departmental meetings and frequent discussions between members. There is a clear development plan for the department. Arrangements are in place for the head of department to monitor what goes on in classrooms and check what pupils are doing by marking their books. This provides useful management information, but it does not always lead to sufficient action.
- 136 Currently there is a shortage of staff due to late resignations; although this is being dealt with well, it produces an increased management load for the head of department, which will be difficult to sustain because of the amount of time it is occupying.

## ART AND DESIGN

- 137 The overall provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The studios leading from the central gallery offer very good accommodation.
- The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are strong
- Pupils know the progress they are making because of teachers' good assessment.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils lack practice in evaluating their own and others' work during lessons, so their critical skills are not developed.
- Not all pupils use their sketchbooks effectively to plan and extend their ideas and this is an area for improvement.
- Standards are not high enough at GCSE.

- 138 Achievement is satisfactory with some under-achievement in Years 10 and 11. Although they show good technical competence in their drawing and use of different materials, few pupils make the intellectual or creative effort to achieve the highest marks.
- 139 Results achieved in 2000 GCSE were just in line with national averages. There was 100 per cent pass rate. Sixty-two per cent of the pupils achieved grades A\*-C, but few at the highest grades. Girls' results were well above the national average with higher marks than in many of their other subjects. Boys' results were well below the national average, much lower than girls, with the difference between them greater than nationally. Results declined after the last inspection but recovered in 2000 to the standards reported on five years ago. In 2001, results fell once again.
- 140 By Year 11 the standard of work seen is satisfactory overall with some under-achievement. Higher attaining pupils are confident and at their best when developing their work through different media. For example, from a drawing of musical instruments arranged as a 'still life' in the classroom, Year 10 pupils develop their ideas in watercolour, pencil, charcoal, pastel, collage and card. Lower attaining pupils show less technical skill in their drawings, but their work also shows experimentation with a wide range of materials. They follow instructions but

weaknesses are due to poor preparation and carelessness in providing finishing touches. In studying the work of artists, pupils frequently struggle with the vocabulary needed for description and analysis. One Year 11 class, studying the Fauvist Movement, with paintings by Matisse and other artists, showed technical competence in making good copies with coloured pencils. However, even the higher attainers had little knowledge of, and found it difficult to talk about, the work or record their feelings other than superficially. Similarly, pupils are hesitant to discuss or write about their own work. There are talented pupils who respond well to a higher challenge. However, too many pupils in Year 11 work unhurriedly and are satisfied with less than their best. While technically competent, few make the intellectual and creative effort needed to achieve the highest marks.

- 141 Teacher assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above average with almost every girl and boy gaining level 5. However, the work seen suggests this assessment is too high and that standards of work in Year 9 are average overall.
- 142 By the end of Year 9, pupil attainment is average. Girls operate at a slightly higher level than boys with a sound level of drawing skill derived from careful observation. Higher attainers show a good level of concentration. Lower attaining pupils depend heavily on class teacher support. Literacy weaknesses affect pupils' reading for research, limit their vocabulary and writing notes. Oral skills are generally underdeveloped and pupils lack the confidence to discuss their work. However, the teachers' recent focus on using the correct words for art functions, media and equipment is a good start in remedying this.
- 143 As pupils move through the school, achievement for the majority is satisfactory. Good work in Year 7, based on line and tone to create an illusion of three-dimensional shapes, is a good foundation for observational drawing later. Year 8 pupils draw from life. A Year 8 class made good pencil studies of a class member dressed as a 1<sup>st</sup> World War soldier. Year 9 pupils refine their initial drawings with a wider range of materials. Through Years 10 and 11, many pupils have a rigorous approach to drawing and show sound compositional skills. Progress is most marked in pupils' development of practical skills working in two and three-dimensional materials and mixed media. More industrious pupils tackle and interpret for themselves a range of given tasks in any one project with a degree of imagination and originality. Critical studies are not used as an effective means of inspiration and stimuli and pupils' ability to evaluate their own achievements and those of others is a weakness. Although a small number of pupils use computer-generated imagery and word processing to enhance presentation, there is still no opportunity for pupils to explore computer-aided design as part of the taught courses. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into art lessons, and make progress that is at best satisfactory, but the individual help they receive from the class teacher is limited by class size and lack of additional support.
- 144 Since the previous inspection, the use of sketchbooks has been extended. Pupils in Year 7 use their sketchbooks well in class and for homework. As they move through the school, some pupils use their sketchbooks very well – for designs, photographs and drawings which feed ongoing work, and to record grades, teachers' comments and their own targets. The sketchbook becomes an expanding diary of the pupils' art development. However, not all pupils use their sketchbooks effectively and this is an area for further development.

- 145 Pupils' attitudes to work are satisfactory across the years. Pupils generally settle quickly in class, do as asked and treat their work and equipment with care. They are courteous to each other and to teachers. Most pupils want to do well, though a minority lack involvement and interest, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and their attitudes have an impact on standards.
- 146 Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are particularly effective when assisting small groups or individual pupils. Teachers plan lessons carefully to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. An assessment at the end of each unit ensures pupils know how well they have done. Since the previous inspection, departmental consistency and practice in marking has improved. However, teachers do not involve the pupils in evaluating what has been learned or in celebrating successful work during each lesson, so they miss the opportunity to challenge the pupils to think about and discuss their work. Teachers willingly give their time during breaks and lunch times.
- 147 Strengths noted in the last inspection have been maintained, though ways to extend the most able are still being explored alongside raising attainment at GCSE. Management of the department is good. The commitment to improve is shared. The introduction of photography at AS-level has proved very popular with students and is making a positive impact at sixth form level. The good accommodation is well used, especially the 'gallery', one of the many areas in the school where pupils' artwork is attractively displayed. Outside visits, including an annual trip to Paris, have been an excellent feature of the department in broadening artistic interests, but are currently limited to the sixth form.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 148 Overall, the quality of provision in the department is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Overall, teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and learning is best where use is made of exemplar material and products to stimulate discussion and design.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about design and technology, particularly their practical work. Pupils develop good relationships with teachers, share ideas, and work well together. The department is popular.
- Department staff work well together, under a new head of department who has a clear vision of current strengths and necessary developments to improve the consistency of standards.
- Staff have a flexible and broad approach to teaching across subject specialisms.
- The new head of department has a clear and purposeful vision of necessary changes.

### Areas for improvement

- The department does not make consistent use of assessment and data to monitor pupil performance, to inform teaching and planning, or to set meaningful targets.
- The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is in need of review and re-mapping against the National Curriculum.

- Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below national averages, and vary across specialisms within the department.
- Expectations of the quality and quantity of work vary too much across the department.

- 149 GCSE results for the whole department in 2000 were low, in comparison with all maintained schools, at 34 per cent A\*-C, and fell further in 2001 to 24 per cent. Pupils' average point scores were also well below average in 2000. Results in childcare were similar but fell less markedly this year. The most recent comparison with results in other subjects in the school indicates, however, that pupils in the department do only very slightly worse overall than they do in their other subjects. The quality of pupils' practical work in many specialisms, where seen, is poor, and organisation and presentation of project folders varies considerably across the department. Girls' performance is better than that of boys.
- 150 At the end of Year 9, teachers assess pupils' performance at 56 per cent level 5 and above which is below the national average, but the department does not establish baseline data on entry, and is not secure in its end of Year 9 assessment across the department.
- 151 Overall, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently working at about the level of national expectations in their practical work, although standards are variable across the department from above to below average. Pupils' work in Year 11 indicates that the quality of project folders is often lower than their practical work and depresses their examination achievements. Some are well organised, particularly in food, textiles and electronic products, and develop a balanced view of the design process. In most areas research is well underway, and pupils make good use of questionnaires. They are starting to use ICT in the analysis and presentation of the results. Graphic skills are again not consistently developed or applied in project presentation, for instance where pupils in resistant materials seldom utilise any formal drawing techniques or standard dimensioning. Pupils have little understanding of less formal sketching techniques, or what is meant by developing a busy page of ideas to aid the development of a design.
- 152 The standard of work of current pupils in Years 7 to 9 is overall below the level of national expectations, although it varies and is sometimes better. Pupils work safely with a wide range of materials to develop skills and techniques. By the end of Year 9 they have designed and made desserts for healthy eating and cushions which reflect the needs of users, and worked with simple electronic circuits and plastics to produce a moisture sensor. They are starting to develop an understanding of the design process, but their designing and graphic communication skills are underdeveloped and expectations across the department are variable and generally low. Pupils' evaluation of their own work is often superficial, and would benefit from a structured writing framework.
- 153 Teaching is good overall, but stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 where it is satisfactory. There are some examples of very good teaching in older classes. Teachers generally set clear objectives, and are secure in their subject knowledge and questioning. Teachers share their natural enthusiasm, and focus upon individual needs. They encourage pupils to become independent learners using individual support and better target setting.

- 154 In project work at Years 10 and 11, teachers in some areas provide pupils with a clear guide to what is required of them and when, but this is not consistently applied, and expectations of project work are generally lower than of practical work in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is best when the use of good exemplar resources and products develops questioning and understanding, for instance when samples of raw materials were shown in a textiles lesson and mechanisms models discussed before pupils designed their own automatons. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods, but there is little attempt to stimulate intellectual debate at an appropriate level. Teachers' flexibility of approach to teaching aspects of the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is a strength, and the department is well aware of continued training needs to ensure consistency.
- 155 A marking policy is in place, but it is not used consistently. There are some examples of good practice in target setting, and these should be extended consistently across the department. The use of assessment to inform teaching, planning and target setting is at an early stage of development, and good practice should be shared and developed. Work in classes is not often sufficiently differentiated, but where present, learning support is appropriately deployed and liaison with teaching staff is effective. The needs of gifted and talented individuals are not addressed other than by banding some class groups. The department does not sufficiently share level descriptions or break these down for individual units of work. Subsequently, pupils do not know what level they are working at, and teacher assessments at Year 9 are less secure than they might be.
- 156 Accommodation and resources available are generally well matched to the needs of the curriculum, particularly leading up to GCSE, but there are some shortcomings. One of the food technology rooms has limited pupil capacity. Limited use is made of the central project area, newly equipped with computers, to enhance studies in satellite classrooms because of timetable restrictions, and there are few computers in classrooms. There are few examples of specialist software available in the department such as Pro-Desktop to support post-16 design work, or those to support electronic product courses or textile studies. Inadequate use is made of limited display space available to stimulate learning or cultural awareness. The department has no control technology equipment, and as a result, only partially complies with National Curriculum requirements for Key Stage 3. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are in need of review and re-mapping against the National Curriculum. The lack of modern computer controlled manufacturing equipment anywhere in the department also reduces the opportunity to enhance the quality of pupils' practical outcomes.
- 157 Pupils' learning is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9: in general pupils of all abilities learn equally well in the department. Whilst pupils enter the department with generally low abilities, they demonstrate that when encouraged, they are capable of work closer to national expectations. In Years 10 and 11 pupils approach their project work with enthusiasm. Pupils' approach to homework contributes less well to their achievement. Their learning is enhanced when they make and modify prototypes. Pupils need to be provided with more investigative examples, and stimulating display material. Pupils, particularly the less able, would benefit from consistent application of key word lists and writing frameworks to support the development of project objectives. In Years 7 to 9 pupils learn about food hygiene and make changes to recipes. They learn how to translate a circuit design into a printed circuit board (PCB) layout, and are taught how to use a sewing

machine. Some of the products made are less challenging than they might be and offer limited opportunities for the diversity of design appropriate for this key stage.

- 158 There are fewer links with industry or other further education providers than might be expected, and the department does not develop spiritual, moral, social or cultural dimensions fully within schemes of work. Following specialist training, the incorporation and review of ICT opportunities in schemes of work, and the review of software and equipment requirements, should be a priority for the department development plan.
- 159 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout the department are on average good. There are few examples of poor behaviour, and these are handled well by staff. Pupils (if occasionally initially slow to settle), are rapidly on task, and keen to get on. They are enthusiastic about their practical work and enjoy coming to the department which is popular. Pupils work well together and develop good relationships with their teachers. They are used to routines because resources are well organised.
- 160 The department makes good use of the excellent technical support provided by the technician who interacts well and enthusiastically with staff and pupils. The efficiency of some lessons was improved by the preparation support provided. Some consideration might be given to the equality of support offered across the department. The use of terminology is not standard across the department. A consistent approach to this and other issues such as assessment and monitoring practice, and project expectations, needs to be developed in order to establish a department ethos fully understood by pupils and staff alike.
- 161 Since the last inspection, attainment in the end of Year 9 remains below average, and some tasks remain insufficiently challenging. Results at GCSE level remain well below the national average, and insufficient attention is still paid to the quality of products made in some specialisms. Post-16 attainment remains below national averages. The marking of work and quality of written feedback to pupils about attainment and progress is still variable. The department has taken some steps to address issues related to the ability range in Years 7 to 9, but some tasks set are not matched well to pupils' capabilities and expectations are sometimes low. Teaching group sizes have improved, as has the quantity of technician support time available.
- 162 Management in the department is currently satisfactory. The new head of department is providing good leadership, expressing interesting and clear ideas for future development, and fully aware of current shortfalls. Staff work well together, and are flexible in their approach to teaching subjects particularly in Years 7 to 9, but there is little sign at this stage that data is being used effectively to inform teaching or planning. The department offers a wide range of appropriate courses, but must address the issue of poor performance. The strengths of the team leave the department in a good position to review the curriculum and department practices in order to move forward.

## GEOGRAPHY

- 163 Provision for geography is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards at GCSE and A-level were above the national average in 2000.

- A strong team of three full-time specialist teachers with good subject knowledge and understanding, and competent classroom management skills.
- Marking of pupils' work is good, frequent and with constructive comments.
- Planning of the curriculum is good, with fieldwork an important feature, and case studies well resourced.
- Good accommodation for geography: a suite of three classrooms with attractive display, storage areas and a good resource base.

#### Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Key Stage 3, to develop the use of National Curriculum levels and descriptors throughout Years 7 to 9, for pupils to understand how they can improve.
- ICT cross-curricular requirements are not met, with few functional computers in the department and limited access to the computer rooms in school.
- The balance of teacher-talk and pupils' activities needs to be addressed, to increase pace and productivity and to promote discussion and group work.
- Increased curricular links with primary schools would improve the continuity from Year 6 to Year 7, to be more aware of pupils' previous experience.
- Spiritual awareness and multi-cultural development need to be made more explicit.

164 Pupils enter the school with slightly below average attainment overall; most make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 show a steady improvement over the last three years, to be in line with national averages. GCSE results for geography were above the national average for the percentage of A\*-C grades in 2000, with 100 per cent pass grades. There is no significant trend over time; results have varied with the option choices of each year group of pupils, and the proportion of boys and girls. In 2001 the percentage of A\*-C grades was well below the national average, although the number of passes has always been high.

165 The analysis of a sample of last year's books from Years 7 to 11 showed good achievement, above national expectations, particularly for the middle attaining pupils. Work seen in lessons during the inspection was good overall in Years 7 to 9. It varied between sets in Year 9, ranging between below average, when it was affected by a few examples of poor attitudes and bad behaviour, and above average in most lessons. Very good work was seen in a Year 8 top set lesson on the Kobe earthquake of 1995, where pupils were actively involved, sorting statement cards, discussing the causes, effects or prevention facts in pairs, and then writing notes individually on prepared structured grids. This led into extended writing of a 'newspaper' article for homework. Pupils in mixed ability Year 7 groups were developing map skills well, showing competence in using atlases, and understanding of latitude and longitude. Small groups of low attainers and pupils with special educational needs in all years are helped to achieve by the individual attention and patient manner of teachers and learning support assistants, and by suitable structured worksheets. Higher attainers in each class sometimes finished work early, and were not sufficiently stretched or challenged.

- 166 Case studies were used to good effect to promote interest as well as knowledge and understanding of themes and places, with effective use of well-chosen and lively resources such as video extracts and a range of textbooks. Year 10 pupils developed understanding of the causes and effects of the Mississippi floods of 1993, building on knowledge gained in previous lessons on the Lynmouth floods and the river Rhine. The skills of annotating diagrams and maps are developed well throughout all years, and were seen to good effect in Year 11 lessons where pupils were writing up their fieldwork investigations of an urbanised village. The option system in Years 10 and 11 does not allow setting, although pupils with learning difficulties or low attainment achieve well through extra attention and structured worksheets. Higher attainers are not challenged enough to develop greater research skills or take responsibility for their own learning.
- 167 Teaching is good. The three full-time specialist geography teachers have very good subject knowledge, and understand how to apply this to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Planning of lessons is good, although more structured materials for lower attainers and more challenge for higher attainers would improve learning overall, by increasing pace and productivity. Classroom management techniques of the teachers are good, though sometimes instructions on how to answer verbal questions are inconsistent. Learning is good overall, but on a few occasions it does not match the good teaching where pupils' attitudes are poor, with lack of attention and bad behaviour demanding too much time in some Year 9 classes.
- 168 Leadership and management, as seen by the existing documentation, the evolving schemes of work and the planning and organisation of teaching and learning, are satisfactory. The new head of department was unfortunately absent for several weeks, but the previous head of department was very helpful while in school temporarily covering for the week of inspection. The timetable includes many split classes, with three non-specialists taking one or two Year 7 or 8 lessons, detrimental to pupils' learning. Accommodation is good, with a suite of three rooms and plentiful storage and office space; however, there is noise disturbance between the rooms, and only outside doors to each with no waiting space for pupils. Display is very good, particularly in Room 52 with its lively demonstrations of pupils' work. Resources are good and well used, with excellent use of OHP and video clips, although each room is not equally equipped. ICT is not sufficiently developed within the geography department due to insufficient functional computers, and there has been no significant development since the last inspection in provision or use. Overall, with an increase in standards up to 2000 and more good teaching, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## HISTORY

- 169 Overall the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Effective leadership and management with a clear focus on raising standards.
- Teamwork and a shared commitment to improve.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- Set clearer targets for raising attainment by individual pupils and by groups.
- Increase the use of ICT to support learning.
- Develop further strategies to develop the literacy skills necessary for pupils to succeed in history.

- 170 The standard of work in Years 7 to 9 is broadly in line with national expectations. At the end of Year 9, standards of attainment measured in National Curriculum assessment by teachers in 2000 were above average, with little difference in attainment between boys and girls. In 2001 attainment by this measure was higher. Over the last three years it has been above average, with girls' attainment generally higher than boys. Variations from year to year are largely explained by the different level of attainment of the pupils when they came into the school.
- 171 The standard of work seen during the inspection is broadly in line with national standards. Written work is in line with national expectations but pupils' understanding and their oral work are above average. Pupils of below average ability can describe historical changes and give some of the reasons for main events and some of the results of them. They are beginning to produce structured writing. Pupils of average ability can make links between events; they can compare historical sources to identify similarities and differences and are beginning to evaluate these sources. More able pupils can select and deploy information to produce structured work of a suitable standard and they can evaluate sources of historical information effectively. Most pupils understand that history can be interpreted in different ways and most can use historical terminology appropriately. However, many pupils are better able to express their understanding in speech rather than in writing.
- 172 In 2000 overall attainment at the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations was below average, and that of boys was well below average. GCSE results in 2001 were much closer to national standards and those in 1999 were above average. These variations are largely related to the different levels of prior attainment of those pupils opting each year for history at this level. In addition, discontinuities in staffing almost certainly depressed the results in 2000. Attainment over recent years has, therefore, been broadly in line with national expectations.
- 173 The standard of work seen during the inspection was also in line with national standards. Pupils of below average attainment can extract and deploy information from historical sources; they can compare sources and draw some conclusions from the comparison. These pupils frequently demonstrate their knowledge and understanding better in class discussions than in formal writing. Pupils of average attainment can produce pieces of extended writing using correct historical terminology and they can evaluate historical sources at a level appropriate to their ability. Those of higher attainment can produce a good standard of extended writing, analysing questions and deploying their knowledge and understanding effectively. These pupils understand quite difficult historical concepts and they can compare historical sources and evaluate them thoroughly.
- 174 At the time of the last inspection, attainment was below average. Since then, the standard of work seen and the results of national assessments have both improved.

- 175 The great majority of pupils show interest in their history lessons. Pupils concentrate well and try hard. Their behaviour is good. They work well together in groups or pairs, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on the dissolution of the monasteries and in a Year 11 lesson on the Cold War. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive, with both confident enough to use humour where appropriate. Classes sometimes show real enthusiasm for the topic they are studying, for example in a Year 10 lesson when preparing coursework on the Jack the Ripper murders. The great majority of pupils make a good effort with their written work although, in general, girls make more effort with organization and presentation of this work than boys. There are occasional instances when pupils' attention is distracted and sometimes their effort wanes towards the end of lessons. In a few lessons a minority of pupils are rather passive. Pupils of all abilities make sound progress in relation to their previous learning, including those with special educational needs. Pupils in Year 10 show good progress at the start of their GCSE course.
- 176 The quality of teaching overall is good. More lessons were good than satisfactory, and some were very good. Almost all the good and very good lessons were taught by specialist history staff. A number of consistent strengths make teaching effective. Management of pupils is good so that there is an orderly working environment where pupils stay on task. A variety of teaching strategies is used to stimulate interest and the methods and materials used allow pupils of different abilities to learn. Group work, role-play and drama are used effectively. Skilful questioning by teachers means that pupils are encouraged to participate in discussions and their learning is checked. Pupils are often challenged to think for themselves; for example, Year 7 pupils were challenged to solve a water problem for a Roman town. The writing skills so crucial to success in history are taught systematically. Pupils understand what they are doing in lessons, although more time could usefully be spent in explaining the objectives of each lesson at the start and summarizing what has been learned at the end. Where ICT is used – as in a Year 8 lesson with lower attaining pupils – it is effective in supporting learning, though this use is rare. There is a good programme of visits and fieldwork to stimulate interest in the subject and motivate pupils.
- 177 Pupils' work is marked and assessed regularly. Teachers give useful diagnostic comments to help pupils improve their work, particularly in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils understand how well they are doing in history. They are less clear, however, about the targets at which they should be aiming.
- 178 Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has only been in place for a year but has already achieved a great deal. His leadership gives clear educational direction with a focus on raising attainment. There is a shared commitment to improvement among history staff. There are good systems for monitoring attainment and progress, though these are better developed in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Assessment data for GCSE students is monitored to identify under-achievement and examination results are analysed to inform future teaching and planning. There is a good scheme of work, which ensures consistency across the department and provides support for non-specialist and less experienced staff. The department development plan sets appropriate targets though these need to focus more clearly on outcomes and pupils' attainment.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

179 Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory** but with weaknesses in certain areas.

#### Strengths

- The good management of the subject.
- Pupils' use and understanding of word processing.

#### Areas for improvement

- The planning of the curriculum to build on the existing knowledge of pupils.
- To develop the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- To continue to develop teachers' competence.
- To raise standards at Key Stage 4, in particular GCSE.
- To give pupils opportunity to develop their understanding of control technology.

180 Teachers' assessment of 14 year olds at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that standards were below the national average. However, direct observation of pupils' work indicates that pupils are now achieving the expected standard. The results of the 2001 GCSE examination were below average when compared with schools nationally. A contributory reason for these low results is due to delivery of the subject by non-specialist teachers, the change of hardware during the course and staffing problems.

181 Pupils join the school in Year 7 below the expected standard but, with the benefit of regular lessons, make good progress so that, by the time they are 14 years old, they are reaching the expected standard. Pupils have a good understanding of the word-processing application and use this confidently. They enter the text in varying styles and size, use the appropriate procedures to edit their work and are developing a good understanding of the production of a document to suit a particular audience. An example of this was the production of a brochure about Bracknell. Here pupils used a range of communication techniques in a publication giving information about the local area, with easy to read text in columns and with placed digital photographs of places of interest. Pupils have developed an understanding of the use of a database. They enter the data and know about the query facility to filter particular information. For instance, pupils in Year 9 were using the recently installed database of books in the school library with understanding, successfully searching for the titles of books by a particular author. Pupils have an understanding of a spreadsheet and have modelled situations in their project work, using the appropriate formulae for easy mathematical calculations. However, although pupils are able to use these applications their understanding of their use in a wider context is too narrow and few are able to give examples of where it might be used beyond school. Although pupils are developing a basic understanding of control technology using the 'Logo' program, (a simple control program) development is in its early stages and there are too few opportunities to experience more sophisticated programs. Therefore this element is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this, has recently purchased the appropriate software and plans to introduce this element to all years when teachers' competence has been developed.

- 182 All pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to study for a long or short GCSE course and standards in work seen in Year 11 suggest that improvement is continuing and by the time they are 16 years old, they are in line with expectations. Pupils' knowledge of word processing is further developed and the majority of pupils are independent users, using the application to present their coursework in other subject areas. Pupils are beginning to use a range of programs in their individual projects and are developing an understanding of how they can be used in different ways. For example, pupils develop in their projects a use of a spreadsheet to represent its use in a supermarket, a database of members of a library and the benefits of using the mail merge facility. These different applications are then evaluated, comparing the advantages and disadvantages and presenting their conclusions.
- 183 Pupils at both key stages use the facilities of the Internet with confidence and understand the benefits when researching information for topics and projects. The use of e-mail is under-developed. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are often paired with more confident pupils and achieve appropriate individual targets. The overall standard of pupils' attainment has been maintained since the previous inspection
- 184 Teaching overall is satisfactory. Two lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used skilfully to explain procedures to pupils. The outcome of this is that pupils settle to work quickly resulting in progress with learning. However, the lack of an interactive whiteboard to demonstrate new procedures meant that on occasions pupils did not always fully understand how to access a program and time was wasted visiting pupils individually to re-explain the process, slowing the pace of the lesson and learning. Questioning of pupils is generally good and is used effectively to challenge pupils, although in a minority of lessons it is poorly directed, resulting in a small number of pupils dominating the lesson. Teachers have good discipline, insisting on quiet when explaining the task. Relationships are good and teachers promote a relaxed ethos. Pupils respond well to this approach, feeling confident to seek help when in difficulty, contributing positively to their learning.
- 185 Planning of lessons is generally thorough but there are occasions when the content is inappropriate, failing to take into consideration pupils' previous knowledge, resulting in pupils losing interest, becoming restless and slowing the rate of learning. Homework, when set regularly, does not always support pupils' interest and understanding. On the occasions during the inspection when homework was set few pupils had completed the work and the response to questioning was slow. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection.
- 186 The management of the subject is now good. The head of department, who has only had overall responsibility for the subject since the beginning of the term, has a clear vision about the development of the subject and the need to raise standards. Changes have already been implemented and this is having an impact on the quality of teaching, but provision for ICT across the curriculum has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection. The steering committee, led by the headteacher, is meeting to promote the use of ICT across the curriculum. With the new updated hard and software the subject is well placed for future developments.
- 187 Although some subjects are using ICT to support pupils' learning, the provision overall is unsatisfactory and in the majority of subjects the use is limited. The

majority of pupils are confident with the use of the word-processing application and many have chosen to use the facility for their individual projects but few subjects have details in their schemes of work and much of this work is completed on a voluntary basis on pupils' own computers. This lack of use is partially due to restricted access to the computer suites. This has now been remedied and resources have been increased with updated hardware. Some subjects, however, are beginning to develop the use of ICT to support learning. The music department is using a program to help develop composition but this is only used for examination pupils. The design and technology department is at the early stages of developing its use of ICT and is using appropriate software to support food technology, but the department lacks the appropriate software to be able to develop control technology. The school has its own weather station but technology is not used to record or log data on a regular basis. Teachers' lack of confidence and competence is the main reason for insufficient use of ICT. Training of teachers is in its early stages but where teachers do have confidence ICT is contributing positively to pupils' skills and learning. Effective use is made of a learning program for pupils with special educational needs to support learning in mathematics and literacy. In order to promote the use of ICT across the curriculum there is now representation from each department on the ICT committee and weekly sessions are offered to teachers who lack skills and confidence.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

188 Overall, the quality of provision in both French and German is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The teaching of the highest attaining pupils has a fast pace and is challenging.
- The writing of pupils in Year 10 and 11 is improving because they are doing coursework.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils of average ability are not stretched enough.
- The behaviour of some pupils, especially those in Year 9.
- Pupils do not file their work carefully and revision, especially of grammatical points, is difficult.

## French and German

189 The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in French and German in the GCSE examination in both French and German in 2000 and 2001 was well below the national average. This trend has been stable over the past three years except for a dip in the German results in 2000. About double the percentage of pupils is entered for German than is nationally the case but the number of pupils entered for French is average. Girls do better than boys but all pupils get lower results in French and German than they do in other subjects they take in the school. Almost all pupils are entered for the GCSE and achieve grades A\*-G, although in 2001 several pupils did not achieve a grade as they were absent from the examination.

- 190 All pupils study either French or German in Years 7 to 9, with higher attainers studying both. Few pupils currently study both languages in Years 10 and 11.
- 191 Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 in both languages are below the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally in both languages. This represents unsatisfactory achievement as pupils are not making as much progress as they should. Staffing difficulties have meant that many classes have two different teachers and pupils have made slow progress. The higher attainers study both languages and make good progress in both. By the end of Year 9, most pupils improve their listening and reading skills in both languages and understand a range of topics such as descriptions of people and talking about what they did during their holidays. Most writing is short; it is not often accurate or well presented. Pupils are able to hold short conversations with satisfactory pronunciation but fluency is limited by lack of practice and many pupils are reluctant to work from memory. Some pupils, particularly those in the middle groups in Year 9, have poor attitudes to learning a language and behave badly, which means they do not make as much progress as they should; they find it difficult to concentrate for the full hour of the lessons. Higher attainers make satisfactory progress overall but are not often asked to write at any length or in a more imaginative way. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in writing because they are given carefully structured tasks. Although pupils are taught at least two tenses, by the end of Year 9, few have a really secure understanding of this and other grammatical knowledge is weak. Pupils have difficulty in recalling basic grammatical facts and do not file their work carefully enough to be able to refer to it later.
- 192 Pupils are attaining well below the standard expected nationally for French and German by the end of Year 11. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement for those pupils studying for a full GCSE. Those studying for a short course achieve satisfactory standards in the time available. Pupils doing the full GCSE have not achieved as well as they might because there have been several long-term absences of staff, and pupils have not always had a language teacher to take the lesson. Just as in younger year groups, almost every year group has at least one class where two members of staff share the teaching and therefore there are problems of continuity. Pupils make some progress in a range of topics such as holidays and descriptions of their daily routine. Pupils write at greater length for coursework and their work is well presented and reasonably accurate. Higher attaining pupils do well, especially in German, because they are given challenging tasks and because they have not been as badly affected by staff absences. Speaking skills are weaker than they should be for most pupils, including the higher attainers, because they do not practise holding sustained conversations often enough in class. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially in reading because they are given lot of help and short, simple tasks.
- 193 The quality of the teaching is unsatisfactory overall, and especially in Year 9. Pupils do not learn enough but there have been improvements recently, especially in writing. In the very good lessons, teachers plan lessons well, they use interesting materials and they have good strategies to manage the behaviour of pupils. These include good calm beginnings to lessons and insisting on silence when something is being explained, and lead to relationships between staff and pupils which are good. In contrast, in some lessons when the work is not carefully explained and when the teacher fails to take into account pupils' lack of basic knowledge, such as when pupils in Year 9 had to follow some complex directions on a map with very little help available, pupils misbehave. Generally though, instructions are clear; pupils know

what they have to do. Teaching, when done in French or German, gives pupils a good model to follow and leads to good pronunciation by pupils. Teachers often use a range of well-designed materials and in the best lessons teachers move swiftly between a variety of activities without allowing pupils time to misbehave. In the best lessons the higher attainers are encouraged to work at a quick pace and on extended texts. This is especially evident in German. Pupils enjoy and respond very well to lessons in which they are allowed to move around the class asking each other questions to which have been well prepared in advance. Homework is set regularly and helps to reinforce what has happened in class.

- 194 Pupils are not always encouraged to file their work carefully and so have difficulties using it for reference later, a problem which is not helped in that pupils also do not have a text book each to take home. Marking in books is satisfactory and it usually suggests how the work could have been improved; this is particularly effective in helping those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are, nevertheless, given helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons. Currently very little ICT is used in lesson time. In Years 7 to 9 pupils do not always have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, what level they are performing at, or know what they need to do to improve. This is better in Years 10 and 11 when pupils are much clearer about the examination criteria and what is needed to improve their marks.
- 195 The department is satisfactorily led and managed, The recently appointed acting head of department has instigated some changes such as coursework for pupils in Years 10 and 11 which has improved the writing of those pupils currently in Years 10 and 11. There are also after-school revision clubs in both French and German aimed at helping those who might get a grade D to improve to a C. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and to reduce the inconsistencies in teaching quality seen in the department. There are plans to increase the opportunities to use ICT. Assessment of pupils' performance and using this information to target specific areas for pupils to improve has only just begun in the department and there is further work to be done in this area.
- 196 The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection as attainment has fallen. The recent changes brought about by the new acting head of department indicate that this downward trend is about to be reversed but there has not been sufficient time for this to have significantly affected performance to date.

## MUSIC

- 197 Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards in GCSE music are high
- Accommodation for music is good and supports the high standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of computers for music should be developed urgently.

- 198 Music is well placed both physically and in management terms in the department of performing arts. Standards of attainment are high in GCSE music, which is offered

as well as expressive arts. Recent staff changes and illness mean that music was not seen in its usual conditions during inspection week. The use by pupils of computers for composition has yet to be developed.

- 199 At the end of Year 9, teacher assessment of pupils shows the majority reaching the standards expected in each of the past two years, close to the national average (no figures were available before this). Girls do better than boys as they do nationally. In 2001 four times as many girls as boys were placed at the highest two levels. At the end of Year 11, GCSE passes at A\*-C in the last two years (not offered in 1998/9) have been well above the national average, though with small numbers. In expressive arts, some pupils prioritise music. With far greater numbers, standards here and in music have been well above the average of other subjects in the school.
- 200 The sample of pupils' work and lessons observed in Years 7, 8 and 9 show that pupils are making steady progress with most working at or near the level for their age. They keep a diary of practical work experienced, reflect on their learning in written evaluations after every module and are made aware of points to improve. No recordings of previous work were heard but in lessons seen about half of each class worked well in small groups. They were seen combining rhythms in Year 7, devising melodies in Year 8 and building variations over chord sequences in Year 9. They listen well to each other's performances and are generally familiar with stave notation. Pupils with special educational needs usually participate fully and achieve, though there is no support assistance in music lessons, nor evidence of planned differentiated tasks. Those with behavioural difficulties sometimes disrupt others and slow the pace of learning for all. There are important limitations on progress currently. Many pupils have experienced a lack of continuity in teaching during the last year. Because of illness, 15 classes were taught by non-specialist supply teaching during the inspection week. This is having an adverse effect on standards of both higher and lower attaining pupils.
- 201 Numbers of pupils choosing GCSE music have increased markedly this year, with a preponderance of boys in Year 10. Year 11 pupils respond well to the aspects of the course dealing with classical music and have a good knowledge of their learning. They question the teacher appropriately and respectfully, which extends and reinforces their understanding. Those in Year 10 are of more mixed ability. Most show understanding and skill at an appropriate level in performance, composition and discerning listening. One pupil for whom English is an additional language has very good skill in music manuscript writing and as a pianist. Some pupils word process some written tasks. No use of computers for notation, sequencing or recording was seen, though this is due to be introduced. Most of these pupils are supported by instrumental tuition, including voice, guitar, keyboard and drums, for which parents pay. More differentiated tasks and experienced teaching are needed to raise standards still further, enabling pupils to reach their potential. Some continue their studies in A-level performing arts at school after the age of 16. A few continue in further education.
- 202 Teaching in music was satisfactory at the time of the inspection when observations had to be restricted to the two newly qualified teachers because of the more experienced teacher's absence. Standards indicate that teaching is usually good. Strengths in Years 7,8 and 9 are the good relationships with most pupils, awareness of the value of group discussion and effective management of pupils and of time within lessons. To improve standards, in particular pupils' understanding of musical concepts, teaching needs to incorporate examples of music more, within

explanations and discussion. The use of smaller spaces for group work needs more careful planning, for example in the allocation of pupils and instruments, with more precise expectations. Teaching needs to be more aware of individual differences between pupils to encourage achievement for all. GCSE pupils' work shows a satisfactory coverage of the course. Teaching tries hard to ensure understanding by all pupils of fundamental aspects, such as the cycle of keys or structures in classical music. All pupils are encouraged to participate. Development is needed in raising expectations of the more able and in the application of subject knowledge to teaching at this level. Teachers need to seek the best, most efficient way to develop interest and curiosity, using the pupils' own practical ability as musicians, for example through singing and playing chord sequences.

- 203 The grouping of music with dance and drama is a strength of management. Joint planning of the curriculum, assessment and reporting is a benefit to pupils' development through the arts. More could be done to emphasise common concepts, such as form, contrast and climax. The temporary arrangement for joint responsibility shared among three part-time teachers is precisely worked out and has been satisfactory. These include development of the subject, particularly of assessment, continuity of the many extra-curricular music groups and developing links with feeder schools. The school finds recruitment of music teachers difficult, both permanent and supply. Time for music in the curriculum now meets statutory requirements, though the use of computers does not. Standards and numbers for GCSE have improved. Resources are basically good, but some instruments are in need of repair or, as with one piano, renewal. Accommodation is good. There is great potential for music to flourish within the department and the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 204 Overall the quality of provision is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Examination results are consistently above average.
- Pupils throughout the school acquire high levels of knowledge and understanding, good levels of individual skill and show the ability to select and apply these in lessons.
- Teaching is very good; the use of assessment has a particular impact on pupils' achievements.
- The extensive and successful extra-curricular programme involves a significant number of pupils.
- The excellent leadership and management of the subject promoting high standards for pupils and staff.

### Areas for improvement

- A more regular review, by pupils, of their individual learning targets.
- The development of leadership accreditation specifically for pupils not following examination courses.
- More chance for pupils to use the digital cameras for evaluating performance.

- 205 All pupils entered for GCSE gained a pass grade, with a high percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades. Results have been well above the national averages for some years and were much better than other subjects achieve in the school in 2000.
- 206 Overall, by the end of Year 11 standards are good. Pupils have good levels of skills in the subject and understand what is necessary to produce a good performance. Pupils of all abilities studying at GCSE level demonstrate a good level of understanding of successful performance in games activities. Examples were seen at an introductory level in Year 10 basketball where pupils were required to analyse the tactical use of offensive skills and in a Year 11 rugby lesson where pupils were able to explain and give detailed reasons for a range of attacking skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, on non-examination courses, were able to draw on their previous knowledge, developing compositional ideas in dance and more advanced tactics in netball. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their officiating and leadership skills in lessons but there is no formal accreditation system in place.
- 207 By the end of Year 9 standards are good as pupils acquire, develop, select and apply skills across the activity areas. A significant number of pupils perform below what is normally expected for their age when they come into the school at the beginning of Year 7. This was seen in two Year 7 games lessons where pupils lacked the basic body management to perform attacking skills. They make rapid progress and in a Year 8 gymnastic lesson the majority of pupils performed at the level expected, selecting and combining movements with increasingly consistent control. A significant number of pupils in Year 8 basketball and Year 9 hockey, gymnastics and dance lessons worked beyond the level expected. Pupils in these lessons showed increased understanding of their own and others' abilities, suggesting ways to improve performance. They applied techniques in games, developed complex sequences in gymnastics and used compositional principles in dance.
- 208 Teaching is very good overall; pupils consistently learn and apply new skills. The main features of teaching are clear objectives, challenging pupils to generate and express ideas, and the consistency of teachers' approaches to assessment. Teachers show very good subject knowledge. They explain things well and give very good demonstrations. In lessons they match activities skilfully to the pupils' different abilities. A Year 8 lesson in basketball, developing the 'fast break', for example, included the use of diagrams, and teacher and pupil demonstration, to clearly explain the success criteria. The lesson gave the opportunity for pupils to work together to begin to solve problems in positional play. The teacher gave effective feedback to improve individual performance and used questioning to check on technical language. Pupils linked skills together and applied them effectively by the end of the lesson. The majority of lessons seen included many of these features. On the very few occasions learning was overall sound but less effective, pupils were not given clear success criteria.
- 209 Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons are very good and the level of participation by boys and girls is excellent. Pupils respond well to feedback from the teacher and from other pupils, in all year groups. In a Year 7 netball lessons pupils observed and helped improve performance without being asked and in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson pupils were positive and sensitive when evaluating the performance of others.

210 Very effective teaching and learning results from the subject being well led and managed. The new schemes of work reflect the subject requirements. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is planned to support the development of pupils of all abilities. There is an extensive range of participation and competitive opportunities available to all pupils in the extra-curricular programme. There is no system in place to monitor pupils' activity levels, promoting the minimum recommendation of two hours activity a week for all pupils. There is a consistency of teachers' approaches to assessment recording and reporting. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets; these could be used more effectively if reviewed by pupils more regularly. Accommodation and learning resources are very good and contribute to high standards. Access to digital technology would enhance pupils' skills in evaluating and improving performance. The issues from the last inspection have all been addressed.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Most of the teaching is good and often very good, and pupils' progress is good.
- Very good results since 1999 in the GCSE full course.
- Supportive day-to-day management in the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of documentation.
- The use of assessment data and target setting, and monitoring their effectiveness in raising standards.

212 The number of pupils entered for the GCSE full course gradually declined from 1998, but then rose to 52 in 2001. From 1999, all pupils have passed at grades A\*-C – very significantly better than the national expectations. The number of boys and girls was roughly equal in 2001 and the performance of boys and girls was similar overall. Entries to the GCSE short course have shown a decline from 205 in 1999 to 152 in 2001. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C steadily increased from 1998 to 2000, but fell from 58 per cent in 2000 to 7.8 per cent in 2001 – well below the national average; at grades A\*-G the percentage fell from 98.5 per cent to 94 per cent. Staff have analysed the decline in pupils' achievement and are implementing sensible strategies to improve standards.

213 By the end of Year 9, the standard of pupils' work and progress is good. Pupils have a basic knowledge of some beliefs and practices in six world religions. They know about such topics as the founders of faiths, holy books, major festivals and worship. They can give meanings for some symbols and use technical terminology. Some show an appreciation of the inter-relationship between beliefs and practices. Some pupils have difficulty in talking about their own beliefs and values and some confuse beliefs, practices and technical terms in different religions. There is no

significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs also acquire knowledge and understanding and make sound progress, but they often have difficulty in expressing their ideas in writing. The written work of higher attaining pupils is often of a very good standard and is usually well presented, as in some Year 9 books where pupils were explaining phenomena in the life of the Buddha or engaging in imaginative explorations of their own feelings in relation to a New Testament parable. In Years 10 and 11 the standard of pupils' work is satisfactory and progress is sound in relation to the GCSE syllabus. Pupils know about some contemporary moral and religious issues within such themes as war and peace, marriage and divorce, and arguments for and against the existence of God. Pupils are acquiring the skills of presenting arguments with evidence, reasons, and explanations, but some find it difficult to apply their knowledge of religions to specific moral problems and to present a well-balanced argument with relevant information and examples.

- 214 The attitude of most pupils to learning is good. Where they are appropriately challenged and the content is interestingly presented, they co-operate well, and listen to the teacher and to each other. Nearly all pupils willingly talked about their work and seemed keen to succeed. Several commented on the enthusiasm of their teachers and the ways in which they made the subject interesting. They usually showed respect for differing viewpoints and practices. A small number were inattentive in parts of lessons and needed to be frequently rebuked by the teacher.
- 215 The teaching was overall good and it was very good in Years 7 to 9. All the lessons observed were taught by specialist teachers, who have a very sound grasp of the subject. A small number of lessons are taught by non-specialists, who are well supported by specialist staff. Most lessons are well planned and delivered at a brisk pace. A range of teaching methods stimulated pupils' interest and facilitated their understanding. These included penetrating questioning, discussing difficult concepts, giving clear explanations, presenting pupils with challenging tasks, and engaging in simple research. In a Year 11 lesson on arguments against the existence of God, pupils were vigorously questioned about a horrific picture from the Vietnam war, they read and commented on a poem, 'Is God to blame?', composed a reply in verse or letter form, read about Father Kolbe's experiences and death, reflected on how he might have reacted to the poem, and listened to the teacher's exposition on such concepts as self-sacrifice and freedom. All pupils contributed to the lesson and found it intellectually and emotionally challenging. All lessons advanced pupils' knowledge and understanding. In a Year 9 class pupils confidently used several technical terms, such as 'anatta', 'anicca', examined some artefacts and discussed their use and significance, listened to an exposition of the concept of 'happiness' and extracted relevant information from the textbook. Time was used effectively, except in parts of two lessons where there were some interruptions and the allocation of time to some tasks was too generous. Most teachers have a good relationship with pupils; they create a positive learning ethos and try to raise pupils' self-esteem. Encouraging comments are sometimes written in pupils' books, but they need also to be helpfully critical by indicating in what ways pupils could improve the quality of their work. Although there were examples of word processing, teachers need to encourage greater use of ICT.
- 216 The head of department gives sound academic leadership and is very supportive of colleagues. He takes part in the monitoring of teaching, consults with staff informally each day and has regular departmental meetings. The department is very supportive of the aims of the school and makes a very good contribution to the

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The head of department ensures that the programme of study is in line with the recommendations of the locally agreed syllabus. However, the quality of the departmental handbook could be improved with such additions as a little more detail in the development plan, the adding of schemes of work for some modules in Years 7 to 9, a range of specific strategies for raising standards, and very specific statements about the implementation of the department's philosophy on assessment and target setting and the monitoring of their effectiveness in raising standards. The department's programme of visits to, and visitors from, ethnic minority centres needs to be expanded to enhance pupils' understanding of world religions and cultures.

- 217 The last inspection, criticism was made of 'inadequate staffing'. The school's response has been very positive. Three experienced specialists are now in post, the department has three specialist rooms of good quality and a fair share of curriculum time to teach the subject.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### Business Studies

- 218 Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Results in GCSE business studies are above average.
- ICT is very well used within the department, and the accommodation and resources are good.
- Care, encouragement and praise are well used.

#### Areas for improvement

- The teaching is sometimes not challenging and does not make enough demands on the pupils, who are often rather passive.

- 219 The GCSE business studies results were significantly below the national average in 1999, but they rose well above in 2000 and maintained this high standard in 2001. Pupils in both 2000 and 2001 did much better in their business studies examinations than they did in their other GCSEs. This was the case with both boys and girls. Over the last three years boys' average performance was close to the national figure, while girls' was below, but this includes the below average results of 1999. In the last two years, both boys and girls had results above the national average, and they were above expectations and represent good achievement for the pupils.

- 220 The overall standard of work of the pupils at present is satisfactory. They organise the work in their exercise books well and keep them tidy. Some pupils are making good progress, participating actively in class and showing a sound grasp of business concepts, while the understanding of others at this early stage of the course is still basic and lacks confidence, and their written work is of a higher standard than their oral answers.

- 221 Teaching is satisfactory. It has many positive features, such as the use of real-life examples to illustrate points, for example the current Railtrack problems in a discussion of private and public ownership. There is good use of ICT in the classroom and whole-class learning is often switched to individual learning by computer, for example through BBC Byte-size Revision on the Internet to research company structure. The teachers' knowledge is sound and good use is made of encouragement and praise. Problems are anticipated, for example in a data search exercise on the Internet, where spare copies of printouts were prepared in expectation of a printer failure. On the other hand, the pace of the classes can be rather slow, and while sometimes over-involvement by the teacher makes learning rather passive, at other times instructions for individual working are not clear enough. The skill of note taking while listening is not practised, and many pupils are not actively involved by the teacher in discussion.
- 222 Overall, learning is satisfactory. Many pupils show initiative and can get on well on their own and make progress. They help each other and co-operate constructively in finding and organising information, especially when using ICT. Learning is less successful when the class is all together, and this is because the teachers have not yet devised a method to promote active learning in the whole group. At times, the pupils were inattentive and slow to take notice of instructions. Management of the subject is sound. The new head of department is putting into effect plans to improve teaching and learning and the organisation and pace of work, which are helping to improve standards.

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

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

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

### ***GCE AS-level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	50	63	50	17	2.3	1.6
Full Design and Technology	6	83	75	-	25	2.0	2.1
Computer Studies	3	100	72	-	13	2.3	1.7
Other Social Studies	10	80	70	20	18	2.0	1.7
English/Language	12	100	98	58	37	3.7	3.0
Communication Studies	9	100	88	22	22	3.0	2.4
General Studies	26	73	72	19	18	1.9	1.9

### ***GCE A-level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	100	89	70	45	7.2	6.0
Biology	16	81	88	13	34	3.8	5.3
Chemistry	12	83	89	50	42	6.0	5.9
Economics	7	86	88	29	36	5.1	5.4
Computer Studies	15	100	85	40	23	5.7	4.6
Sports/PE Studies	4	100	91	25	25	5.0	5.0
Art and Design	9	100	96	22	45	5.8	6.4
Geography	9	100	92	33	37	5.6	5.7
History	10	90	89	20	34	4.4	5.4
Other Social Studies	1	100	88	-	35	6.0	5.3
English Literature	10	100	96	40	36	6.0	5.9
Communications Studies	2	-	93	-	30	-	5.4
French	3	100	91	67	39	7.3	5.7
German	3	100	92	67	41	6.7	5.9

### ***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business		14	-	-	-	13.3	10.
Health and Social Care		3	-	-	-	8.0	10.7

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES AREA**

224 The focus in this area was on mathematics, chemistry and physics.

#### **MATHEMATICS**

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

#### Strengths

- Results in GCE A-level examinations are consistently above the national average.
- Results in GCE AS-level in 2001 were above the national average.
- Standards of attainment in lessons are good. Students are confident and have a good grasp of concepts in all of the taught areas of mathematics. They make good progress.
- Teaching is of a high standard. It is always at least good and is often very good. It is occasionally excellent.
- Standards in Key Skills Application of Number are good. The course is well organised and teaching is good.
- The department is well led and managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- A substantial proportion of students dropped out of the early part of the Year 12 AS-level course.
- Overall, numbers of students studying mathematics have been in steady decline in recent years, as in many schools.
- Whilst students in Year 13 are confident and able, the small number in the group inhibits them from discussing mathematics enthusiastically.
- Whilst resources are adequate, more use could be made of computer software to enhance learning.

226 Results in GCSE A-level show that the proportion of Year 13 students attaining the highest grades, A and B, was well above the national average and all ten students gained at least a pass grade, A-E. Results in 2001, against the same criteria, were almost as good as those in 2000. However, they were commendable because seven of the 18 students gained grade A. At 39 per cent, this is in line with the

national average for A and B grades combined. In 2001, results in AS-level examinations were above the national average.

- 227 The standards of work produced by current Year 13 students are well above average in both pure mathematics and mechanics. Their progress is good, even considering their very good prior attainment in GCSE. They quickly gain confidence in using trigonometric formulae to verify identities. Their recall and understanding of formulae are good. Their learning is enhanced by the sheer enthusiasm of the teacher who is skilled at gauging the correct amount of guidance to give these able students. In mechanics, the same students understand that the work done by a force against resistance equals the change in energy. They recall formulae for potential and kinetic energy quickly and have a good appreciation of the implications of negative quantities in such problems. The teacher is skilled at building confidence by good board work and voice projection. Sufficient time is allowed for students to apply their knowledge to a variety of questions in order to build a depth of understanding.
- 228 Students in Year 12, studying pure mathematics and mechanics, are making at least satisfactory progress. The class, consisting of all boys, understands that the discriminant in the formula for solving quadratic equations is used to inform the number and type of solutions. They learn because the teacher structures learning well, shows enthusiasm for the subject and quickly spots any misunderstanding. This enthusiasm from the teacher helps create a lively atmosphere in the small group. Students studying pure mathematics and statistics make very good progress. In an excellent lesson covering work on both quadratic equations and coordinate geometry, they worked at breathtaking pace throughout. By the end of the lesson they had mastered work started in a previous lesson on the use of discriminants in quadratic equations. They had also discovered formulae for the length and mid-point of a straight line, aided by clever prompting, well-structured guidance and very high expectations from the teacher. The same students also make at least good progress in statistics. In a very good lesson, the teacher timed activities well and gave just sufficient guidance to allow students to gain a depth of understanding in aspects of statistical distributions. By the end of the lesson, they recognised the implications of positive and negative skewness, and related these to equivalent 'box and whisker' diagrams. Year 12 students, studying intermediate level GNVQ business, attain a good standard in Key Skills, Application of Number. They show confidence and accuracy in rounding to significant figures and calculating quantities in given ratios. The teacher relates the work to real life to make the work appealing.
- 229 Teaching is good overall and is often very good. It is occasionally excellent. Teachers plan and assess their students well. Homework is given regularly and expectations of teachers and students are high. Teachers have good subject knowledge, yet skilfully avoid being too didactic and allow students sufficient time to work independently in class. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject.
- 230 Students have a very good attitude at all times. They are respectful, hard working and accept a challenge. They persevere well but are not openly enthusiastic about mathematics. They have a good awareness of their level of attainment because assessment is good and questions are regularly given from past examination papers. Although very keen to succeed, students do little reading around the subject other than using their standard textbooks. Whilst students are currently

highly successful, encouragement and clear direction to do this from teachers would generate more open enthusiasm for mathematics.

231. The department is well led and managed. Clear direction is given regarding schemes of work and teachers are suitably deployed to teach the subject at GCSE A-level. Graphics calculators are used effectively, but more use could be made of computer software to enhance learning in the subject. Designated teachers in the department organise and teach Key Skills Application of Number courses as well as making a significant contribution to A-level teaching. Overall, this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

## CHEMISTRY

- 232 The provision overall is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good understanding of students' capabilities and work hard to ensure that they reach their potential.
- Results are above average and have improved.
- Students show a good attitude to the subject and work conscientiously.
- Resources and accommodation are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough use is made of ICT to enhance learning.

- 233 GCE A-level results are above average and have improved over recent years. Male and female students have done equally well. Although numbers of students have fluctuated over this time, group sizes have been relatively large compared to other subjects in the school and almost all students who have started the course have finished it.

- 234 The standard of students' work seen is above average overall although there is some variation, ranging from just satisfactory to very good. All students are working to their capabilities and files of work scrutinised show a good range of notes and examination answers to written questions, including past examination questions, and practical exercises and investigations. Students marshal their knowledge well and answer questions more clearly and logically as they move through the course as a result of the constructive comments they receive from teachers and practice they have in class discussions.

- 235 In class, students work hard and in one class they showed good progress in their understanding of organic reaction mechanisms through their description of electrophilic substitution reactions in alkenes as a result of well-focused teaching that encouraged them to put the new ideas into their own words. Another class calculated empirical formulae from combustion analysis and then used this and relative molecular mass to devise molecular formulae and possible structures for the compounds formed. Students show good levels of practical skills, manipulating apparatus skilfully and taking measurements accurately. They develop clear hypotheses for investigations, based soundly on a good understanding of the underlying theory.

- 236 Teaching is very good. Teachers are well experienced, have a good knowledge of their subject and seek to keep this up to date with regular development work. They know their students well and have analysed their performance carefully in order to help them reach their full potential in the subject. Lessons are well planned and structured with an effective balance of investigative work to illuminate and enliven the theoretical basis of the subject. During lessons, teachers provide very effective support for students, making sure that they understand the work thoroughly and developing their self-confidence by responding sensitively to questions. This approach has been important in establishing an ethos in which students can explore ideas or iron out misunderstandings openly. In this way students are encouraged to discuss their work. This helps to show how their understanding is developing and teachers use questioning very effectively to deepen it further.
- 237 The subject is led and managed well. There are clear and effective plans for the development of concepts during the course. Students' progress is measured carefully and good use is made of this information to help them achieve well. The course is well resourced with all students having their own textbook specifically linked to the work they are following. They also have access to a good range of other texts in the laboratory and in the library. Students also have opportunities to go on visits to hear lectures and see chemistry at work.

## PHYSICS

- 238 Overall, the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The physics department has good resources and good accommodation.
- There is a very good relationship between students and their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- The number of students, particularly girls, studying physics post-16 is low.
- Greater use of ICT by students and their teachers.

- 239 There were no students taking the A-level physics examination in 2000 and the results from 1999 and 1998 were both broadly in line with national expectations. Most students starting the course completed it.
- 240 In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students in Year 13 was generally at the level expected nationally. The higher attaining students were able to discuss difficult concepts with their teachers in a confident and perceptive way. For example, Year 13 students debated the validity of defining the zero point of gravitational potential as "a point at infinity". Likewise in Year 12, students questioned their teacher as to why the vertical and horizontal velocity components of a projectile are independent of each other. These high attaining students also demonstrated good skill in the application of number, comfortably manipulating extremes of numerical values encountered in astronomy and the study of gravitational fields. Lower attainers were less confident and often struggled with some of the mathematics involved, such as the solution of the quadratic equation  $x = ut + \frac{1}{2} at^2$ . They also had some difficulty with the technical vocabulary used and

the symbolic representation of variables: e.g.  $\Delta s_y$  for the vertical displacement of an object.

- 241 The students, in both Year 12 and Year 13, displayed an excellent attitude towards their work and towards their teachers. Their behaviour in the lessons observed was exemplary with eagerness, curiosity and strong commitment being very evident. However, there are no girls currently studying physics and this has been the case since 1998 at least. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls at GCSE and an enquiry into the reasons for the apparent lack of appeal of physics for girls at this school is needed.
- 242 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good. Good teaching was observed in a lesson dealing with gravitational fields where students were encouraged to challenge and discuss the definitions of field strength and potential. In this way, their understanding of these concepts was greatly enhanced. Similarly, during a lesson on projectiles good teaching was demonstrated by the teacher raising the students' awareness of how the formulae derived may be applied in the real world for rocket or missile release. Less satisfactory teaching was observed where the teacher made unrealistic assumptions about students' prior mathematical knowledge and their experience, for example, when dealing with the solution of quadratic equations and the resolution of vectors into components. This resulted in the physics being completely masked, for some students, by their confusion over the mathematics involved.
- 243 Teaching, and hence students' learning, could be improved by a greater use of stimuli during lessons. Only one example of a demonstration was witnessed – using a rubber sheet and a heavy ball-bearing to demonstrate the meaning of a potential well – and there was no use of ICT or audio-visual aids seen.
- 244 The quality of students' learning was good, in general, particularly for the higher attainers who had the confidence to challenge the teacher and reflect fully on the concepts being taught. For all students, there was evidence of good consolidation of previous learning from the work seen during the inspection. Learning was best achieved when the students could see the topic in context and understand how it related to other areas of the subject. When studying gravitational fields, for example, an awareness of the almost identical nature of electric fields makes the study of each seem easier and provides the student with added confidence. Learning was slow and difficult when the teacher made unrealistic assumptions about students' prior learning, particularly in their mathematical capability.
- 245 Management of physics is sound, but the use of monitoring is under-developed. Good use is made of assessment to help students do better. The physics department is housed in well-equipped and roomy laboratories which provide a very good learning environment for the students. While this certainly enhances the standard of education received by the students, these facilities could be further exploited through more frequent teacher demonstrations and student practical work in lessons.
- 246 Students' attainment and progress have not significantly changed since the last inspection and remain at a satisfactory level. However, the small number of students opting to study physics is a cause for concern, particularly its complete lack of appeal for girls.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING AREA

- 247 No courses in this area were inspected in detail. **Design and technology** was sampled. GCE A-level results for design and technology students who gained a pass in 2001 are currently below the national average, although numbers of entries are low and so comparisons are statistically unreliable. The proportion of students gaining higher grades A-B was well above average. The standard of work of current students is good. Year 12 students are only a few weeks into their course, but have already made good progress. They have carried out meaningful research, both in and outside school, and make good use of their ICT skills on the Internet as they investigate their chosen 'system'. They know how to analyse a 'system', how to identify important areas for research and plan future work accordingly. Products being developed by Year 13 students are well matched to their abilities, and students demonstrate a good ability to carry out product analysis. They structure their project work producing clear development plans, and bring different skills to the group, which they readily share.
- 248 Teaching is often very good. Teachers know the students well and successfully transmit their skills with enthusiasm for the subject. Students show an appropriate degree of independent learning and organisation, some having made direct contact with outside agencies to aid their research. They make very good use of the Internet to pursue their project studies. Whilst many are not afraid to ask for help and guidance, there was some reluctance to enter into the level of debate necessary at this stage.

## BUSINESS AREA

- 249 The focus was on **business studies** GNVQ at intermediate and advanced (now AVCE) levels, but **business skills** RSA/Pitman was also sampled, as was **economics** at A-level (now AS and A2). A-level economics results were below average in 2000, but above in 2001, and in both years they were in line with expectations. Students are achieving the expected levels in the business skills course, considering their starting points. Eight lessons in business and economics were observed, and the overall standard of teaching was satisfactory. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

- 250 Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Results overall are above average. Intermediate and advanced GNVQ business, in particular, has shown a marked improvement since 1999.
- ICT is very well used within the department, and the accommodation and resources are good.
- Care, encouragement and praise are well used.
- There is careful record keeping, particularly in GNVQ subjects.

### Areas for improvement

- The teaching is sometimes insufficiently challenging, and does not make enough

demands on the students, who are often rather passive.

- Some marking is rather rudimentary, and does not contain enough helpful comment and advice for improvement.
- There are several non-business specialists teaching in the department, and in-service training for them, especially in courses outside school, could be better. This particularly applies to staff entering the school

251 The GNVQ advanced business studies results in 2001 were above the national average, as they were also in 2000. The completion rate for the course was high, and there was no difference in the results of boys and girls. They showed a high proportion of merit and distinction grades. Similarly, GNVQ intermediate business had a very high completion rate (100 per cent in 2000 compared with 73 per cent nationally), with many grades above pass level. A-level economics results showed a very high proportion of top grades in 1999 and 2001, when every student passed the examination. 2000 was the exception, with a lower proportion of high grades, and this was because of the low results obtained by boys. The first year of AS-level economics showed results well below average in 2001, and well below expectations, but the marking has been the subject of appeal.

252 The standard of work of current students is satisfactory. Their files and portfolios are well kept and organised. Their achievements are in line with predictions based on their GCSE results. The degree of involvement in class activity is variable, and this reflects the teaching style, which often does not ask enough of them. They tend to work and acquire knowledge relatively slowly. But when they are engaged, their work shows rigour and thought, as in the exploration of techniques to draw together data from market research into employment patterns in one Year 12 class, or in an analysis of consumer demand seen in another.

253 Teaching overall is satisfactory, but of the lessons seen, only three were good. Where good teaching occurs there is careful use of individual questioning to draw all students into discussion, as in a Year 12 intermediate class on business legislation, where each student was carefully picked out. Where it is good it is energetic, the pace is fast, and there are clear instructions; students are put on the spot and sometimes required to demonstrate their understanding in front of the class; very good individual attention is given and teachers promote a climate of co-operation. It is often imaginative, as in the use of rubber bands to illustrate demand 'elasticity' in Year 12 economics, or in the use of a Central Intelligence Agency website to research developing economies in Year 13. Teacher knowledge is usually very sound and confidently displayed. Much constructive use is made of praise and encouragement to motivate students. However, more often the teaching is only satisfactory, and this is where, despite positive features, not enough challenge is given to students, or when the use of time and resources is not to the best advantage, for example, in a Year 13 lesson where the students were set to work silently at a task for half of the available time, or in a Year 12 business skills class where they were asked to type in the same data three times. In written work, the use of extended marking and comments to help students to improve their standards could be better used.

254 Student learning, overall, is satisfactory but, as with teaching, there are both good and less satisfactory features. Where it is good, students are willing to take initiative in learning and helping others. This was particularly noticeable in the

GNVQ classes, where they frequently broke into individual or small group work and were to be seen co-operating well. Their use of ICT is good. On the other hand, they often do not show great imagination in their studies. For example, in a Year 12 class on the design of a questionnaire, they showed a marked lack of initiative in writing a set of questions, or in devising strategies for doing so, such as with the use of reference books. Their capacity for active independent learning is often not well developed, and they sometimes show a lack of confidence in their abilities.

- 255 The present head of department has been in place only since September 2001, and provides energetic leadership. An effective evaluation of the department's work has already been carried out. Based on this evaluation, the departmental development plans and the current year targets are a sound basis for advance, focusing, amongst other things, on improved teaching and learning, new schemes of work, and the training of new staff. The plan includes procedures to monitor progress.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AREA

- 256 Computer studies was inspected. Results are above average at AS-level but few students take the subject at A-level. Teaching is good, based on substantial expertise in the subject and students respond well.

### COMPUTER STUDIES

- 257 Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Results in recent AS-level computing examinations were above average.
- Students' attainment is well above average.
- Students have a good knowledge of programming language.

#### Areas for improvement

- A lack of opportunities for students to experience ICT in its wider sense in a work situation.

- 258 The most recent results for the AS-level computing examination show that students achieve well. Almost all students completed the course and all students entered achieved a grade and the proportion of those achieving a higher grade was well above average. All the students achieved high grades for the GCSE examination. Their achievement in the first year in the sixth form has been good. Although the numbers are less this year, these are an improvement on previous results. The numbers entered for the A-level computing examination in recent years has been decreasing, with only one student achieving a grade in 2001.

- 259 The work seen in lessons, examination of previous work and discussion with students about their individual projects for the AS-level, show that standards are well above average. Students have a good understanding of the use of a database, confidently creating the appropriate data. In discussion with students about their projects for the AS-level they spoke knowledgeably about the topic.

They talk clearly about the difficulties they encountered and how they were solved with a good understanding and, when the problems had been solved, how they evaluated their results manually to test their calculations.

- 260 Students have good knowledge of programming language and procedures. They have experience of using binary, Visual Basic and Pascal language. Student's preference is Visual Basic, explaining with knowledge the main differences and the use of the syntax. Although some students are able to discuss the use of ICT in its wider context few students have had the opportunity to experience, first hand, the complexities of its use in large organisations. Good opportunities are provided for all students in the sixth form to study an ICT Key Skills course. These students are making satisfactory progress and the majority are working at level 3.
- 261 Students show a very good level of interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When working on new procedures they are willing to help each other solve problems, suggesting ways to overcome difficulties, and contributing well to their learning. This was evident during a lesson on the use of Pascal language. When a student was not sure of the correct procedures others were quick to help and guide. All the students have their own computer at home with the appropriate programs to support their work and much of the work is completed at home. Access to computers at school is good. Students feel that they are appropriately challenged.
- 262 Overall the teaching is good. In the lessons observed teaching was at least satisfactory and two thirds were good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use their expertise effectively to guide students and to offer solutions when experiencing difficulties. Clear explanations at the beginning of lessons enable students to start work promptly. However, some lessons tended to be delivered in 'lecture style' and teachers did not always use questioning effectively to ascertain understanding. The outcome of this was that some students did not understand the procedure and had to wait for a further explanation. Teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and are quick to give help when required. There is, however, a tendency for teachers to give the solution rather than using well-focused questioning to encourage students to work systematically through a problem.
- 263 The teacher who has overall responsibility for the subject at sixth form level leads the subject appropriately and provides good support for colleagues. Monitoring of teaching has not taken place. Students have too few opportunities to visit organisations in order to develop their knowledge about the use of ICT in its wider sense.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL AREA**

- 264 No subject in this area was inspected in detail, but **physical education** was sampled. In 2000, four students followed the course and results were close to the national average. The GCE A-level examination results for summer 2001 showed an improvement on last year, with an increased percentage of students gaining higher grades. All students gained a pass grade, as in the two years previous. In the new AS-level examination all students gained a pass grade with 60 per cent with grades A-C. Overall there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students. The standard of examination work in the current sixth form is good. In one lesson students successfully drew on their knowledge of energy systems and were able to analyse the stages of the 'excess post-exercise oxygen

consumption' through video analysis. They also applied their practical experience of various sports in determining recovery rates.

- 265 The subject is very well led and managed. There are very effective systems in place to measure students' performance and to support their improvement. Teaching is very good and results in students often achieving better results in the sixth form than their GCSE grades would predict.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE AREA

- 266 The vocational course in **health and social care** was sampled as part of the school's overall provision within design and technology. One lesson was seen; the teaching was good and students picked up the main points of the lesson quickly although the teacher had to work hard to get them to play a very active part in the lesson. All students who entered for health and social care this year gained a pass although numbers are again very low, and results in past years have been variable. AS-level results in 2001 were very low, only 36 per cent of students gaining a pass.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA AREA

- 267 The **performing arts** course was sampled. The attainment of students on the performing arts course is above average. Students have a good understanding of the three elements, music, drama and dance, and use them effectively to produce an overall performance. During a performance, devised and written by the group, students confidently perform in different guises. They are beginning to develop characters to fit individual scenes, creating tension and atmosphere. A musical accompaniment, composed by the students, added well to the dramatic climax. Dance sequences fitted well to the overall performance.
- 268 When discussing movements and devising scenes, all students contribute well, exchanging ideas, planning sequences and lighting effects, and deciding whether the music should change to a minor sound to fit the scene to create atmosphere. The outcome of these corporate decisions was that the next sequence was quickly established.
- 269 The quality of teaching and guidance for the students is good. The good relationship that the teacher has with students contributes well to their creative development, in a situation where students feel relaxed and confident to express their own ideas, leading to a good level of independence and ownership of their performance. The teacher has high expectations of students, advising on rehearsal techniques and on how to improve the overall performance.
- 270 The **art and design** course was also sampled. Results achieved in 2000 A-level were the highest over the last five years. Results have been consistently below the national average, though comparisons are not valid while the numbers taking art are small. Results in 2001 A-level declined and, in its first year of AS, results were spread from A to ungraded.
- 271 The work of students currently in Years 12 and 13 is not as good as usually seen at this stage. Nevertheless, since many students entered the course with average or below average results at GCSE, the standard is satisfactory and, in some cases, achievement is better than expected.
- 272 Higher attaining students in Year 13 show flair and commitment, encouraged by enthusiastic teaching. Work covers a breadth of media. Students demonstrate strong feeling in their personal studies, a good understanding of what is needed, and a high technical standard in their planning and preparatory studies. The work of lower attaining students in Year 13 is limited by being conceptually unadventurous, and too little work is completed. In Year 12, students discuss paintings with initial hesitancy but are gaining confidence. Year 12 students on a photography course,

new this term, are highly motivated and learning quickly from processing their first pictures

- 273 Teaching is consistently good. Students in the sixth form are highly motivated and there is a calm and orderly atmosphere in their studio.

## HUMANITIES AREA

- 274 Within humanities, geography and religious education were sampled and the focus was on history in which students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- 275 GCE A-level results in **geography** dipped in 2001, to below national averages, although previous years have been good, with 100 per cent pass rate in 2000. A large group of Year 12 students took the new AS-level in 2001, and obtained results in line with national averages.
- 276 In the sixth form a group of 14 are following the AS-level course, but only about half intend to pursue geography to A-level. The beginning of this course has been hindered by the unfortunate lengthy absence of the new head of department, and many able students have not sufficiently progressed beyond GCSE standard, as seen in their work on the River Tees. The imminent residential fieldwork experience should improve their interest levels as well as their skills, knowledge and understanding. The Year 13 group of 10 students, reduced from last years AS-level group of 22, are working well at a reasonable standard, but do not appear to have developed discussion or group work skills. A lesson on Tsunamis was too much dominated by the teacher; although the written and video resources were well prepared, opportunities were not taken to develop students' presentation and discussion skills, using their existing comprehensive knowledge base.
- 277 The **religious education** department's first set of A-level results was in the summer of 2001. Seven students sat the examination and six obtained passes at grades A to E, of which five were graded A to C. The results were creditable in relation to national standards and students' previous performance. All the entrants were girls. Two boys entered the AS-level examination and obtained passes at grades C and D. The A-level courses have subsequently been withdrawn, because only a handful of students chose to study these options.

## HISTORY

- 278 The overall quality of provision for history in the sixth form is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Students as active participants in their own learning.
- Very good student/teacher relationships.
- Effective use of diagnostic marking to help students improve.
- Good subject leadership with a clear focus on improving attainment.

### Areas for improvement

- To make greater use of assessment data to set clear targets for individuals and for

each cohort of students.

- To ensure consistency in the high demands made of students.
- To promote further reading in the subject by improving access to books.

- 279 In 2000 the overall pass rate at GCE A-level was in line with national standards but a lower proportion of students achieved the higher grades than nationally. In 2001 the proportion of students gaining the highest grades was satisfactory but a third of the students did not achieve a pass at all. In contrast, the first Year 12 AS-level examination results in the same year were good, with every student obtaining at least a pass grade. Over recent years, sixth form results in history have varied considerably from below to above average: these variations are largely attributable to the differences from year to year in the prior attainment of those studying history at this level. Most students complete the course. There is no clear pattern of different attainment between boys and girls and no clear trend in results since the last inspection. Overall standards in recent years have therefore been broadly in line with national standards.
- 280 The standard of work seen in the sixth form is broadly in line with national expectations. The standard in Year 12 is relatively higher than that in Year 13. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students demonstrated a good level of knowledge for this early stage of the course and a good understanding of cause and consequence in the German revolution after 1919. They were able already to use appropriate terminology correctly. In a Year 13 lesson on Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots, students were able to synthesize information and demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of the material and an ability to make links with previous learning in discussing the options open to Elizabeth. In written work, students of below average ability can produce structured essays to address a question, deploying relevant information, though this is often in a rather narrative or discursive form. They can make use of key terms but their conclusions are often unsubstantiated and there are some weaknesses in English for this level of work. Students of average ability have sufficiently detailed knowledge and understanding of the complexities of historical change to make connections between contributory factors in the causes and consequences of historical events; they can therefore draw balanced conclusions. Students of above average ability can synthesize information from a range of sources, integrating it effectively in an analysis; they can reach a reasoned conclusion and substantiate their conclusion fully. Students can use, compare and evaluate historical sources at a level appropriate to their ability and their stage in the course. Written work in general is broadly in line with national standards but the standard of work in discussions is above average.
- 281 Students in general make good progress. In Year 12 students make rapid progress at the start of their course, which can for many be a difficult time of transition. In lessons, students maintain their concentration and they achieve a lot in the time available. They are make good use of opportunities for discussion to develop their understanding. Relationships are very good between students and their teachers and the students collaborate well on the frequent occasions when they work together. Groups usually understand clearly what they are required to do and they make a good effort with their written work.
- 282 Teaching at this level is good. The requirements of examination syllabuses are covered systematically. Teachers structure their lessons well: they have clear objectives and make productive use of the time available. A great strength of the

teaching methods used is that students are required to be active learners. In lessons, students are regularly challenged and required to think for themselves. For example, in Year 12 lesson on the personal rule of Charles I, students had to make presentations based on their reading and to answer questions which demonstrated their understanding. As a result of the teaching methods used, good progress was made in this lesson. Occasionally, however, some of the demands made on students are insufficiently challenging for this level and students are less clear as to what is expected of them, as in a Year 13 lesson on Nazi policy changes in the 1920s. Individual students sometimes find that the brisk pace of lessons make it difficult to keep up with their own note taking and they occasionally have difficulty with key names and terminology encountered during the lesson. Teachers use resources well but student sometimes find access to books for individual reading difficult.

283 Written work is marked and assessed regularly and thoroughly; teachers write very good diagnostic comments, which help students to improve their work. Students have a good understanding of their performance and potential.

284 Leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. There is a clear focus on developing strategies to improve examination performance and the head of department has a good understanding of the quality of work in the department. Results are analysed rigorously to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning. Greater use of assessment data should, however, be made in order to set clearer targets for attainment at departmental and individual level.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION AREA

285 The focus was on English and French. One German lesson was sampled. In English results have improved steadily and are now above average for both English language and literature. Teaching is often very good and students respond positively to the high level of challenge in many lessons. Few students take French in the sixth form, reflecting the low attainment at GCSE. Results have been consistently above average at A-level. Teaching was good in the one German lesson seen and is satisfactory overall.

## ENGLISH

286 Overall the quality of provision in English language and in literature is **good**.

### Strengths

- Results at A-level in English literature and at AS-level in English language are above average.
- Teaching is very good in the majority of lessons.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is of a high academic standard and this influences students' own aspirations.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are enthusiastic and positive and they are conscious of the high quality of teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Students should be encouraged to embark on the literature course which has not recruited this year.

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- 287 In the GCE A-level for English literature in 2000, the percentage of students achieving the higher grades was above the national average, as was the average points score. At AS-level in English language the percentage of students achieving higher grades was above average, as was their average points score. Results in English literature in 2001 at A-level showed continuing improvement. Performance at AS-level in both subjects at the end of Year 12 exceeded course expectations.
- 288 Students in both language and literature groups are very articulate. They speak with confidence and coherence. Oral response forms an integral part of their learning and is skilfully structured into lessons by very good teaching. Students in Year 13, for example, made carefully prepared extended presentations upon the theme of *The American Dream* as represented in the work of Scott Fitzgerald. Contributions were fluent and well structured showing very thorough knowledge of the novel *The Great Gatsby*. The standard of discussion in all lessons is very high with mature and sensitive exchange of judgements and opinions. High attaining students set standards which influence the whole class. The good- humoured and trusting relationships enhance the quality of interchange.
- 289 Students of literature read widely as a requirement of their course, and language students cover a range of textbooks and wide reading as an integral part of their studies. Sixth form students make good use of the very good facilities in the library.
- 290 Almost all students make useful notes and the overall standard of written work is good. As part of their project in the acquisition of language by young children, students made a very attractive range of publicity material aimed at a precise group of readers. The work was thoroughly researched and skilfully presented using a range of word-processing and desktop publishing techniques. Essays on literary themes are, on the whole, well planned and accurately written. Some of the best work seen was of a very high standard, already reaching the highest grades at A-level.
- 291 Almost all students are keen and committed to achieving high standards. They actively enjoy their course and talk openly and positively about their work and their appreciation of their teachers. Students appreciate the opportunities for discussion in lessons and respect the high quality and academic level of the teaching. They like to be challenged. The positive and purposeful relationships in lessons are largely a result of the high quality of teaching and the example set by staff.
- 292 Overall, teaching is good and often very good. The pace of lessons is brisk and questioning is rigorous. Teachers' high academic standards inspire and encourage. They use praise appropriately and know their students' strengths and weaknesses well. Work is conscientiously marked with much constructive and relevant commentary. Teachers elicit a mature and sophisticated response from their classes and draw together key points cleverly. Students' folders demonstrate the range and depth of their studies and their commitment to succeed.
- 293 Sixth form courses in English are very well managed and organised. One teaching group in Year 12 is too large for the full benefit of post-16 education to be fully realised, but otherwise classes are organised well. Good use is made of assessment information to help students to improve and the head of department has a good grasp of the work going on in the department. Because of the

supportive ethos created in the department by staff, the experience of sixth form students is positive and productive.

## FRENCH

294 Overall, the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

The focus of the inspection was on French, but work in German was also sampled. German is only currently taught in Year 12; results in recent years have been consistently above average. One A-level German lesson was observed; the teaching was good.

### Strengths

- Students persevere even when they find tasks difficult.
- Students speak well when they have had time to prepare their ideas in advance.

### Areas for improvement

- Students often make basic grammatical errors in their writing.
- The variety of tasks in lessons is limited.

295 The number of candidates entered for the A-level examination in 2000 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made. Students performed in line with what would be expected given their results in GCSE.

296 The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that students make appropriate progress. Standards are below average overall in both Years 12 and 13 but this reflects the lower GCSE results obtained by these students and their insecure grammatical knowledge. Students in Year 13 are able to understand complex language and ideas on subjects such as the role of the Resistance during the war and the education system in France. In Year 12, where students have only just begun the course, this is less well developed but they are prepared to try difficult texts and persevere until they do understand. Their spoken language is satisfactory; sometimes it lacks accuracy and fluency but on occasions students speak confidently at length. Most students produce good work when they have had time to prepare it in advance. Pronunciation and intonation are usually satisfactory when students have had the opportunity to practise with the foreign language assistant. The quality of students' written work, however, varies greatly. The most able use complex language and express their opinions and arguments clearly; the least able have a limited recall of vocabulary related to the topic and make basic grammatical errors in their written French.

297 The sixth form teaching overall is satisfactory. In Year 12 there is much emphasis on reinforcing key grammatical points at the beginning of the course so that most students can write more accurately as they progress through the course. The marking of written work is detailed and suggests to students how they might improve both content and accuracy. This advice is, however, not always heeded and many errors recur. All lessons are well planned with resources that meet the needs of the students, challenging them without being demoralising. Teachers encourage students to work out what reading passages mean without looking words up

immediately and to cope with longer passages by getting a flavour of what the whole text is about. This encourages students who persevere when faced with extensive texts. Teachers plan a variety of tasks and activities, which interest students but occasionally there is too much emphasis on one skill, such as reading, in one lesson and the pace slows. Teachers produce good banks of materials, which reflect current issues in French society and help to keep students up to date. Little ICT is used during lessons but students are encouraged to use the Internet in their free time to research topics and extend their knowledge. Students use dictionaries and other reference materials well and refer to notes they have made on grammar, for example. Teachers offer freely of their time outside lessons, to help with problems that individuals may have and this enables them to make better progress.

- 298 Sixth form courses are organised soundly. Students of French benefit from a handbook which sets out clearly what they will be expected to do and when. Students in Year 13 are much more aware than those in Year 12 are about what they have to improve and about the standard for which they are aiming. The head of department, recently appointed, has already made a good analysis of what needs to be done to improve things and has begun to put a development programme into place, monitoring the work going on in the department and making more systematic use of assessment information. Several students would have liked to study both French and German, but chose other options instead.
- 299 The provision in French continues to be the same as at the last inspection. Although students now enter the course with lower GCSE grades they are making satisfactory progress.