

INSPECTION REPORT

WOLLASTON SCHOOL

Wollaston, Northamptonshire

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122059

Headteacher: Michael Browne

Reporting inspector: Terry Cook
2398

Dates of inspection: 28th January 2002 – 1st February 2002

Inspection number: 189979

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
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Graham Jamieson
Date of previous inspection:	14/10/1996

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30206	John Spradbery	Team inspector	Mathematics Sixth Form	How well are the students taught? The school's results and pupils' achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
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13054	Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Main School and Sixth Form	
15977	Maggie Holling	Team inspector	History Main School	
10792	Tony Payne	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology Main School	
23576	Michael Walker	Team inspector	Geography Main School and Sixth Form	
31290	Chris Hassell	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wollaston School is a large 11-18 comprehensive school. It has increased in size since the last inspection from 1131 to 1280 students and is projected to cater for 1356 students¹ in 2004. The school is over-subscribed. This is a reversal of the situation prior to the last inspection. It serves a large area of southeast Northamptonshire. In recent years it has seen a change in the profile of the students entering the school. Sixty seven percent of intake now comes from the traditional school catchment area. The remainder come predominantly from Rushden and Wellingborough. In the past the socio-economic context was favourable but the school now serves students from social backgrounds close to average socio-economic contexts. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Although the school is of the opinion, that due to the changed profile upon entry, it has a higher percentage than is quoted it does not have sufficient data to prove this. The percentage of students speaking English as an additional language is low. Since the last inspection the number of students identified as having special education needs has grown and the figure of twenty six percent is above the national average. However the percentage of students with statements of special education need, at nearly two percent, is below the national average. The school caters for students with a range of disabilities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wollaston School provides a sound education for its students with some strong features, notably in teaching. Standards are above national averages in national tests and GCSE examinations but are below those for similar schools. The headteacher has a realistic view of the school and has a long-term vision, which provides clear direction for the school. The Governing body plays a full part in strategic planning. Overall, the quality of teaching is improving and is becoming a strength of the school. This is now starting to impact positively on the quality of learning in most subject areas. Provision made by the school for students with special educational needs is mainly good. The Learning Support Department plays a key role in supporting and embodying the school's inclusive philosophy, ethos and values and provides good support for specific statemented students and those individuals requiring additional support. There are good links with contributory primary schools which support the students' smooth transition from primary to secondary education. Staff at the school give freely of their time to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities which is well supported by the students. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher's long term vision provides a clear direction for the school.
- The good working relationship between the headteacher and chair of governors.
- The governors play a full and active part in strategic planning and are well led.
- The quality of teaching is improving, particularly the proportion of good lessons.
- The quality of the Learning Support Department and the good support it provides for students with special educational needs.
- Most students have a very positive attitude to school and their attendance is good.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and is well supported by students.
- The school has good links with contributory Primary Schools.

¹ Students will be used as a term throughout the report to match the school's approach.

What could be improved

- Raise standards in English by improving provision in all aspects of the subject.
- All staff should adopt a consistent approach in supporting the headteacher's clear vision for the continuing improvement of the school.
- Ensure full compliance with statutory requirements for careers education, information communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE) in Years 10 and 11 and the act of collective worship.
- The low level of cleanliness and general appearance of the school site and buildings does not support the school's ethos.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement has been satisfactory, but some areas still need addressing. Good progress has been made in raising attainment in French. GCSE standards have risen. The quality of teaching overall has improved. Targets for overall A level performance and for improving students' visual and practical skills in art have been met. In ICT although improvements have been made, some issues still remain. The targets to provide an increased level of challenge for students of high prior attainment, increasing consistency in management, and in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have not been fully met. Whilst the quality of teaching has improved, and now has many strengths, there are still inconsistencies in the setting of homework, marking, assessment and in increasing opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills. The school has fully met statutory requirements for the annual governors' report and in reporting to parents. However, it still does not meet requirements for the daily act of collective worship, RE, and ICT at ages 14 to 16. The recent revision of the school management structure is starting to address some of the issues remaining and is bringing about more consistency of approach. With this and the commitment of staff to ensure consistency of approach is securely established the school has the capacity to improve further.

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	KEY
	1998	1999	2000	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C	well above average A above average B C below average D well below average E
A levels/AS-levels	C	A	D	N/A	

Standards reached in the end of Year 9 national tests and in GCSE examinations are higher than national averages and rising year on year at about the same rate as the national figures.

In comparison with similar schools, standards in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below average for students gaining 5 or more A* - C GCSE grades. When other GCSE measures are compared, including the proportion of students gaining five A*-G grades, these indicate that performance is average in relation to similar schools. The 2001 national tests for Year 9 results, when compared with similar schools, show standards in English to be well below the average, mathematics average and science above average. Standards reached in national tests and GCSE examinations are higher than national averages and rising at about the same rate as national figures. Although progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, it is slower than in most schools in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students gaining five plus A*-C GCSE grades in 2001 was well below the expected figure when taking account the students' attainment in the 1999 Year 9 tests. The lower than expected test and examination results are partly a reflection of the disruption caused by the high turnover of staff. Currently, standards of work are higher, and the progress being made is better than previous examination performance. The school has set targets that, if met, will lead to further improvement. These are not particularly challenging, but are realistic, provided there is significant progress in English.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most students have a positive attitude and enjoy their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	With the exception of a small minority, especially in Years 10 and 11, students behave well.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good, as are relationships generally.
Attendance	Good; significantly above the national average.

Students attend well, concentrate on their work and behave well in the classroom and around school. A few students do not share this ethos; they are overly-lively and disrupt those lessons where teachers are not firm enough.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching has improved and it is now becoming a strength of the school, with all but one in twenty lessons judged to be at least satisfactory and almost two thirds good or very good. Teaching in mathematics is mainly good, and teaching is satisfactory or better in science. However, teaching in English is not as good with a significant proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. Good quality teaching is improving learning in most subjects, except in some English lessons, where teachers do not have high enough expectations of students. Particularly good teaching takes place in art, physical education and modern foreign languages, enabling students to make very good progress. The less than good teaching usually occurs when behaviour of disruptive students is not managed firmly enough. Most teaching is planned well to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties. By contrast, the provision overall for the most able is inadequate. In many subjects able students are not given sufficiently stimulating tasks and have relatively few opportunities to answer open-ended questions or pursue challenging investigations. Their progress is slower than it might be. This is not the case however in modern foreign languages, history, mathematics and design technology.

The use of homework and assessment of students' work is inconsistent, as is the use of

assessment data to direct teaching and learning towards meeting individual targets. Teachers' expectations of and progress in teaching literacy through subjects is uneven. Although there are examples of good practice in promoting students' literacy, a co-ordinated approach across the school is lacking.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is socially inclusive. In Years 7 to 9 it is broad and balanced but in Years 10 and 11 it does not fully meet statutory requirements in RE, ICT and careers education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Students with special educational needs are given good support and have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students from different ethnic groups are treated equally in all that the school does, and there is no marked difference between the performance of students from different backgrounds.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is very good provision for moral education and good provision for social and cultural education, but spiritual development is weak. The school promotes moral and social development effectively in all of its work and cultural matters are given a high profile.
How well the school cares for its students	Sound provision is made for students' safety and welfare. Analysis of performance data and potential is thorough.

The school has good links with parents and provides very good information for them. Most parents hold positive views of much of the school's work. In particular the school has strong links with parents of students who have special education needs. There is good provision for community links.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership and vision provides clear direction for the school. The key challenge for the new senior management team is to translate this longer term vision into short-term action to improve the school further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed and play a full part in forward planning. However, they need to ensure all statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Evaluations are made of developments upon completion but there are insufficient checks made on quality during implementation.
The strategic use of resources	Strategic planning is efficient with financial priorities being clearly related to the school aims and priorities and principles of best value being consistently applied.

Development planning is thorough and extensive. To ensure the energies of the school are used effectively there is a need to prioritise and focus on the key areas for development. Due to constantly rising student numbers and the nature of the buildings and site, financial planning has not been an easy task. However, it has been undertaken well. The school has seen a steadily improving situation in the quantity and quality of facilities available. However, there are still issues relating to the sufficiency, and quality of accommodation, and site. Staffing is satisfactory overall, but staff turnover and recruitment in key departments are still a cause of some concern. Resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory in many subjects but there are areas where this is not the case.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects that students will work hard • Approachability with questions or a problem • Quality and range of extra-curricular activities • School has improved and it is popular • Good teaching • Students become mature and responsible • Special education needs provision/support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability in staffing • Communications with all parents - remove inconsistencies • Behaviour – a small minority of students are disruptive in and outside of lessons • The amount and regularity of homework • Extra-curricular activities, quality and range • More able students are not stretched

Just under a fifth of parents responded to the parents' questionnaire or wrote letters to the inspection team. Most views were positive and inspection evidence supports these. The inspection team is of the opinion, however, that there is some substance to most of the concerns expressed by parents. Equal numbers of parents were pleased with extra-curricular activity as were displeased. However, the inspection team does not share all of the concerns relating to extra-curricular activities. Here the issue revolves around the change in the timings of the school day. Whilst it is recognised that the late lunch time and short time available at lunchtime does have some negative effects, ie, the ability of students to obtain lunch as well as attend activities, on balance the school provides a good range of activities which are well supported by students.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH WOLLASTON SCHOOL FORM

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form takes students from the main school and, increasingly, from schools in the surrounding area. Student numbers in the sixth form are close to the national average for sixth forms in schools. There are currently 144 students comprising approximately equal numbers of girls and boys. Very few students are from minority ethnic groups. Numbers in the sixth form rose steadily to 154 students in 2001, when they temporarily dipped. Predictions through to 2003 show that an expansion in numbers is expected.

The sixth form offers a good range of GCE AS and A level courses as well as advanced vocational and GNVQ intermediate courses in business studies and leisure and tourism. The addition of human biology, information and communication technology and physical education at advanced level has widened provision.

In order to study for advanced level courses students are required to have an entry requirement of ten GCSE points, calculated by the school on the basis of GCSE grades where A*/A=5, B=3 and C=1.

Around 47 per cent of students from the school continue into the sixth form. Most students complete their courses and take the examinations. Attendance in the sixth form is around 92 per cent.

The recently built sixth form centre, with study, information communication technology resources and dining facilities, provides an excellent base for sixth form students.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form has many strengths. With the exception of lower results in 2000, standards in the sixth form have shown a generally rising trend since the last inspection, and in most years have been above national averages. Overall, students make satisfactory progress and achieve standards at the level expected in relation to their previous attainments. In 2001, results at advanced level in business studies, design and technology and sociology were well above the national average, whereas results in physics, art and design and English were well below the national average. The standards of students' work seen during the inspection suggest that standards in art and design and physics are better this year. Students' attitudes are good or better in nearly all lessons, and are never less than satisfactory. Their attitudes to the sixth form generally are excellent. Teaching is a major strength of the sixth form provision. It is never less than satisfactory and most teaching is good or better. The curriculum serves the needs of students well. Although it has been designed to provide students with the highest possible level of choice of courses from the options available, there is a need to extend further the opportunities for students to follow vocational courses and the school has recognised this. A good range of advanced level courses is offered, including vocational business studies and leisure and tourism. The range of advanced level subjects has been increased in recent years in response to students' needs. The sixth form provides a wide range of opportunities outside the taught timetable which enrich the students' experiences and contribute very significantly to their social, moral and cultural development. There is, however, no planned provision for the development of students' key skills in literacy (communication), numeracy (application of number) and ICT and the school does not comply with the statutory requirements to provide a daily collective act of worship or RE. The rising standards, high proportion of good to excellent teaching and effective management provide clear evidence that the sixth form is effective and provides satisfactory value for money.

Strengths

- Results are good in business studies, design and technology and sociology.
- Teaching is usually good and often very good or excellent.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The development of students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning is a strong feature.
- Relationships between students and their attitudes to work are very positive.
- Students' behaviour is excellent.
- The development of students' personal skills through enrichment activities and community service is excellent.
- The day-to-day management of the sixth form centre is very good.
- Guidance and support for students by their mentors and the centre manager is a major strength.
- Provision for students with special needs is very good.
- Quality of provision for community links is good.

What could be improved

- There is too wide a variation between students' achievements in different subjects.
- Subject teachers do not monitor sufficiently rigorously either the standards students achieve, or the work of the minority of students who do not yet learn independently.
- Provision for the development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology is inadequate.
- There is not full compliance with the statutory requirements for RE or for daily act of worship.

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 and Sciences	Provision in biology (including human biology) and physics is good. Although A level results in physics have fallen in recent years teaching is satisfactory to good. Mathematics in the sixth form is good in most respects.
Business Studies	Overall provision in business studies is good. Results are above the national average in advanced and intermediate GNVQ. The standard of work of students is above average. Teaching is good.
Design and Technology	Very good. Standards are high; a particular strength is the presentation of design work. Teaching is good; teachers bring considerable energy, experience and expertise to lessons and they have high expectations of their students.
Art and Design	Provision for art is good. Students currently taking the subject are achieving good standards. There is good teaching and excellent guidance for students.
Geography	Overall provision is satisfactory. In 2001, most students passed

	their A level although fewer achieved higher grades than do so nationally.
English	Provision is satisfactory. Students almost always attain satisfactory standards in lessons. Too few attain higher grades in the subject, as a result of the lack of consistency in teaching. This situation is being addressed, but the history of high staff turnover continues to have an impact on the progress students make, and in particular on attainment at the highest levels.
French	Provision for French is good. Advanced level standards are above average. Good teaching exploits high levels of motivation and enables the students to sustain good progress and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Pastoral support for students is excellent and students receive good additional support when they need it. Students are clear about the progress that they are making, although mentors need to focus more strongly on how students can improve their attainment.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear sense of direction for the sixth form. They evaluate standards closely. They have taken a range of actions to improve standards where necessary, including the appointment of staff with sixth form experience and expertise at this level. With the exception of the lower results in 2000, this has led to a significant upward trend in examination results since the previous inspection. The head of sixth form and his deputies, assisted by the centre manager, provide high quality day-to-day management of the sixth form. Students are helped to do their best and have equal access to the opportunities provided.

In most advanced level subjects students achieve standards that represent satisfactory or better progress in relation to their GCSE results. Standards of work seen during the inspection show similar levels of achievement to past examination results, although standards in art and design and physics are higher than the previous results indicate.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are very approachable and supportive • The help they received to settle in to the sixth form • The quality of the teaching they receive • Encouragement to work independently • Extra-curricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice about subject choice on entering the sixth form • Careers advice for those not going to university

Almost all sixth form students completed a pre-inspection questionnaire. Their responses were extremely positive in nearly every respect. Inspectors agree with these positive opinions although they felt that the provision of advice and guidance on how to ensure progress towards targets could be improved. Inspectors also judged that there were shortcomings in careers advice in Year 11 and for those in the sixth form not planning to attend university.

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 students' achievements

1. Standards reached in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 are close to the national average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. When compared with schools that have a similar proportion of students¹ known to be eligible for free school meals, then test results are well below average in English, average in mathematics and above average in science. Evidence from the inspection suggests that at age 14 students do not make the progress in reading and writing expected for their age. This is because young writers are not always well supported by explicit teaching of writing strategies or taught how to shape and structure their writing to meet the requirements of specific tasks and audiences. The reading curriculum students are offered is insufficiently wide-ranging and over-privileges the reading of literary texts.
2. The performance of girls was higher than that of boys. The difference however is less in mathematics and science than that found in schools throughout the country, because boys' results in these subjects are marginally higher than the national figures. Over the last five years the overall test results in year 9 have been rising at a higher rate than found nationally.
3. Overall standards in the 2001 GCSE examination were above average when compared with all schools nationally and average when compared with schools that have a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. However pupils do less well at the higher grades. The proportion of the year group achieving 5 or more A* to C grades was average when compared with all schools and well below average when compared with similar schools. The performance of girls in the 2001 examination was higher than that of boys but less so than found nationally because of the marginally higher attainment of boys. Overall the results in the GCSE examinations are rising year on year at about the same rate as national figures.
4. Performance in English has declined steadily at GCSE level since the last inspection and is below that found nationally. Some teachers underestimate the standards which the students need to achieve. Older students in particular work at levels below their potential and work in books is suggestive of a casual attitude towards the subject. The school is addressing these most important issues.
5. GCSE performance in mathematics is similar to that found nationally. Performance in GCSE mathematics fell slightly after the previous inspection and has risen steadily in the last four years at a faster rate than found in schools across the country.
6. The GCSE science results reflect national averages, and in 2001 exceeded the grades predicted from the standardised Cognitive Ability Test Scores (CATs) which are used by the school to predict likely performance in examinations. In spite of this, the GCSE results were lower than the target the school set for itself and did not reflect the very good progress that had been made in Year 7 to 9. In recent years, improvement in attainment in Years 10 and 11, as measured by GCSE results, has not matched the upward national trend although the proportion of students gaining an A*-C grade is still above the national average.

¹ Students will be used as a term throughout the report to match the school's approach.

7. Particularly good results were achieved in design and technology, physical education and humanities. These subjects, together with science and mathematics, account for much of the success of a large number of students.
8. Although progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, it is slower than in most schools in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C GCSE grades in 2001 was well below the figure that could have been expected when taking into account these students' attainment in the 1999 end of Year 9 national tests. The school sets targets each year that, if met, should lead to further improvement. These represent an increase on previous years and are realistic, provided there is significant progress in English.
9. The standards of work seen during and the progress being made, if sustained, should lead to improved examination performance. Particularly good progress was observed in mathematics, humanities, modern foreign languages, physical education, art and business studies. During the inspection high quality work was seen in many lessons, with the best in humanities, music and physical education. In other subjects, with the exception of some English lessons, students' work was almost always satisfactory and sometimes good.
10. To some extent the lower test and examination results are a reflection of the disruption to teaching and learning that has occurred in recent years because of the high turnover of staff at the school. However the provision for the most able students is inadequate in many subjects and their progress is slower than it might be. The school has begun to meet the needs of able students through 'Impact Sessions' and other initiatives.
11. Students with special educational needs are fully integrated into the school. The Learning Support Department ensures that they receive intensive small group work, or individual teaching where required, in relation to their individual needs. Support is also provided in specialist subjects across the curriculum in order to help students to participate fully in the national curriculum and accredited courses. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the high quality support that they are given. For some individuals progress is very good in relation to their prior attainment. The majority of students go on to achieve some examination success before leaving the school at the age of 16. Students with special educational needs make the best progress when working with specialist SEN teachers or teaching assistants who have the appropriate expertise and skills. Students from different ethnic groups are treated equally in all that the school does, and their performance reflects this; there is no marked difference between the performance of students from different backgrounds
12. Students, who are particularly talented or able to learn at a faster rate than the majority of their peers, do not receive sufficient attention. They are not identified accurately in many subject areas, and rarely receive work that is sufficiently challenging. It is unusual for them to be encouraged to develop conceptual and abstract thinking, or for them to be helped to make links with learning in other subjects. As a result, the school's GCSE results contain relatively few of the highest grades.

Sixth form

13. Students' attainments in advanced level courses rose considerably between 1996 and 1999 to a level that was well above national averages, both in terms of the percentage of students achieving A-E grades and the average points score, which reflects the grades achieved by students. Following a fall in 2000, the percentage of students gaining A-E grades rose again in 2001 to the 1999 level. This was

significantly higher than the advanced level results at the time of the previous inspection and reflects the rising trend since 1996. However, the average points score per student for 2000 and 2001 was just below the national average. Students' average points score in GCSE and other intermediate level courses have been above average.

14. Overall comparisons of students' results at advanced level with their results at GCSE indicate that they make satisfactory progress and achieve standards that are in line with their previous attainments. However, students' results and achievements vary widely between subjects. In 2001, results at advanced level in business studies, design and technology and sociology were well above the national average whereas results in physics, art and design and English were well below the national average. The standards of students' work seen during the inspection generally match the examination results, although standards in art and design and physics are higher. In most subjects students have been set challenging targets and are usually given work that is sufficiently demanding to allow them to reach these.
15. In the sixth form the majority of students attain standards of literacy that enable them to access the curriculum fully. Students are able to undertake substantial extended pieces of writing and to carry out independent research, for example into the Trades Descriptions Act. The construction of longer, more formal, pieces of writing is, on occasion, of a very high standard. A catering report on the school's cafeteria was well-constructed, showing awareness of the conventions of a formal report, and the minutes of the sixth form committee were of exceptional quality, written with sophisticated expression and assured control of tone. Attainment in speaking and listening is almost always high. Students are amusing and confident, sensitive to humour and to irony, and able to talk to unfamiliar adults about their work and their school informatively and wittily.
16. For a small proportion of students relatively low attainment in literacy constrains their attainment and prevents them fulfilling their potential in the subject. A student who was able to articulate a good understanding of business practice was hampered from translating this into writing because of poor basic skills.
17. Standards in the key skills of numeracy and information and communication technology are generally good. However, as in literacy, occasionally low standards in key skills constrain students' progress. For example, a lack of mathematical understanding constrains some students' progress in physics. The lack of key skills provision means that there are insufficient opportunities for these skills to be developed where they are needed.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Student attitudes to Wollaston School are generally good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The overwhelming majority of students behave in a mature fashion, both in lessons and around the school at lesson-changes and during break and lunch times. They enjoy coming to school. Absence from this school is much lower than it is nationally in secondary schools, although it has risen slightly in recent years.
19. There are parts of the school where the corridors and stairways are very narrow for the number of students having to use them. Most of the time students behave in an orderly manner in these places, but a few can become overly-lively, and jostle other students. This aspect of their behaviour is not managed as well as it could be by the teachers, and some younger students find it intimidating.
20. In Years 7 to 9 students almost always behave very well. They rarely disrupt lessons, they pay attention to their teachers and they are keen to succeed. In Years 10 and 11

behaviour is normally good but about one in six lessons is disrupted by a small but vocal minority. It is noteworthy that the students causing this disruption are not badly behaved in all lessons; they only disturb other students when they are taught by teachers who are not firm enough in dealing with their challenging behaviour.

21. There is little bullying in the school and when it does occur teachers deal with it swiftly and, usually, effectively. There is no evidence of racism or the intimidation of students, although students reported that there have been a few unpleasant incidents on school buses. The school uses fixed term exclusions as a sanction against those students whose behaviour is quite unacceptable. There is a relatively high rate of fixed term exclusions, but the school rarely excludes anyone permanently.
22. Students are proud of the education they receive at their school and many spoke highly of it to the inspectors. They particularly appreciate the caring and pleasant way in which they are treated by the majority of teachers, and they are confident that they will be able to do well as a result of the teaching that they receive. By contrast, they take little pride in the appearance of the school, dropping litter inside and outside the buildings. This is not cleared away frequently enough, leading to low levels of cleanliness that are not acceptable. There is a fair amount of graffiti on books, furniture and there is also a small amount of vandalism, mostly of a minor nature. These things, together with poor maintenance, spoil what could otherwise be a very pleasant learning environment.
23. The personal development of students is good. They cope well with the pressures of adolescent life and enjoy good, supportive relationships with one another. At breaks and lunchtimes most students chat or play together in a mature manner, whilst others make use of the school's computer facilities or catch up with their written work. Many are enthusiastic to take part in extra-curricular activities, including those organised by the music and physical education departments, and in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
24. The positive moral and social attitude of the teachers, which comes through strongly in their lessons and in assemblies, is reflected in the practices of most students. They are caring towards one another and respect the beliefs and feelings of people whose backgrounds and interests may be different from their own.
25. The attitude and behaviour of students with special educational needs is generally good and they are well integrated into the school, enjoying sound relationships with their peers. They respond well to additional adults in the classroom, whether that is a support teacher in mathematics or a teaching assistant in an English lesson. Students with behaviour difficulties are helped in the classroom by support assistants who know them well.
26. In withdrawal support sessions students listen to staff and willingly and confidently respond to questions. They ask questions to clarify their understanding, are enthusiastic and concentrate well, for example, when word processing a newspaper article about the landing of a spaceship locally, or when helping each other spell new words.
27. In their Skillpower lessons in Years 10 and 11 students work independently with confidence and concentration on their individual tasks. They respond politely to staff and have a good understanding of how the course is helping them. They willingly explain how they have designed a puzzle for young children.

Sixth form

28. Students' attitudes are good or better in nearly all lessons and are never less than satisfactory. Their attitudes to the sixth form generally are excellent. Their behaviour in the school and in lessons is also excellent and there have been no exclusions from the sixth form.
29. Students respond positively in nearly all lessons and, when given the opportunity, they engage enthusiastically in activities such as discussions and role play. However, in a small minority of lessons students are content to be passive recipients of knowledge. They do not engage sufficiently with the lesson and seem reluctant to respond to questions from the teacher.
30. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and most respond well to this. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Most seek meetings with their mentors when they need support or guidance but also have the maturity and skills to plan their own study programmes and research the information that they need. However, at present the centre does not provide a programme to support the development of these skills, although the need has been recognised and this is planned for the autumn term.
31. Students express their views strongly but with consideration and understanding of the views of others. For example, in the student committee meetings they have discussed with maturity a range of issues relating to the life in the sixth form centre, showing an understanding of their responsibilities as well as their rights.
32. Relationships between staff and students and between students are excellent and they treat each other with considerable respect and consideration. Students participate readily in a wide range of enrichment and community service activities that focus strongly on helping others. An annual 'Rag Week', organised by the students' social committee, raises considerable sums of money for charities that have been chosen by the students. Students show initiative and readily take responsibility for the organisation of Rag Week events.
33. Attendance is generally good and students are punctual to lessons. The students' positive attitudes are reflected by the fact that nearly all students complete their courses.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

TEACHING

34. Teaching is becoming a strength of the school, with all but one in twenty lessons being at least satisfactory and almost two thirds good or very good. There are few excellent lessons. When teaching is satisfactory, as opposed to good or better, it is usually because teachers do not manage the behaviour of a few disruptive students firmly enough. In a few lessons, in mathematics for example, the pace at which students work slows down towards the end of the lesson and some time is wasted. In most lessons, however, this does not happen and teachers use the time well, introducing a number of different activities as the lesson progresses.

35. Teaching was less strong in Years 7 to 9 where only just over half the lessons were judged to be good or better. History and PE are consistently well taught throughout the main school. During the inspection no unsatisfactory lessons were observed in these subjects and the vast majority were good or very good. Two thirds of the overall unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection was in English.
36. The quality of teaching is considerably better than it was six years ago. The proportion of good lessons has increased from just under a half at the time of the previous inspection to almost two thirds now. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been halved. These are very significant advances resulting in a higher standard of achievement by students. In spite of this progress, excellent lessons are rare and students have few opportunities to extend themselves by developing independent learning skills. This is an area that has not improved since the previous inspection.
37. The overall good quality of teaching is leading to an improvement in learning in most subjects, except English where some teachers do not have high enough expectations of their students. The particularly good teaching that takes place in art, physical education, history and modern foreign languages enables students to make very good progress.
38. The best teaching seen during the inspection was characterised by thoughtful lesson planning and a determined pace being set by the teacher. Another hallmark of these lessons was the teachers' ability to question students carefully about their prior knowledge and to build new learning upon this. In the very good lessons, teachers made the objectives of the lesson clear to the students, engaged them in lively debate about the concepts and ideas behind the lesson and ensured that learning was understood properly and that links were made to other knowledge. ICT and design technology lessons in Years 10 and 11 were notable for the manner in which students not only understood what they were doing, but also understood how well they were doing, and what they needed to do to improve.
39. Most teachers have a detailed knowledge of the content of the National Curriculum and the requirements of the national tests and public examinations. They are also very secure in their understanding of the subjects that they teach. This is evident in the detailed manner in which they discuss the topics that are taught, and in the way that they answer even the unexpected questions. This high level of subject expertise has resulted in students having a strong sense of confidence in the teaching staff of the school and a willingness to work hard for them. Despite this, too many teachers do not challenge and inspire their students to reach the highest levels possible, although some physical education and modern foreign language teachers were exceptional in delivering truly inspirational lessons.
40. In ICT, RE and mathematics some lessons are taught by non-specialists. They work hard to keep abreast of the subject but their technical knowledge is limited and affects the pace at which students learn in some groups.
41. Teachers are careful to ensure that boys and girls, and students of different backgrounds are treated equally in their lessons. Because of this, there is little difference between the progress made by students in these different groups, although girls' attainment is higher than that of boys in most subjects throughout the school. Teachers also plan well in order to meet the needs of students who have learning difficulties. These students are supported well in most lessons, for example, through the provision of differentiated worksheets, in mathematics. In many classes they are

also helped by knowledgeable and caring teaching assistants, for example, in RE in Year 7.

42. By contrast, the provision for the most able students is inadequate in many subjects. It is rare for them to be given sufficiently stimulating tasks, and they have relatively few opportunities to answer open-ended questions or pursue challenging investigations. The school's previous inspection report stated that 'students capable of more rapid progress are held back because of the lack of extension tasks'. The school has failed to deal with this criticism successfully; the most able are not catered for adequately in many subjects and their progress is slower than it might be. There is, however, good practice in some modern foreign languages and history lessons where the most able students are set demanding work and in mathematics where teachers have access to a wide range of worksheets offering varying degrees of challenge. In design technology students are encouraged to think and learn from themselves and from one another, but this is not common practice across the school.
43. Although the most able students are not sufficiently stretched in many of their lessons, the school has begun to meet their needs through 'Impact Sessions' and other initiatives. Particularly gifted children in Years 7 to 9 have been identified; they participate in curriculum days with similar youngsters from other schools. Last year a number of Year 8 students contributed to a poetry book that was published. In Years 10 and 11 a range of extension activities is offered to students at lunchtime.
44. When teaching is of uniformly high quality, teachers question their students well, mark their work regularly and make detailed assessments at the end of each teaching topic. This gives them a very detailed picture not only of the progress made by each student, but also of the areas that each student will have to work on in order to improve further. This information is not always shared with the students, but where it is, it leads to focused and challenging teaching by the staff and a determined and target-driven approach to learning by the student. Whilst very good examples of the use of this type of formative assessment were seen in art and in the special needs department the practice was not consistent throughout the school. In mathematics for example, the marking of students' books was often superficial and in English some teachers were uncertain about the national curriculum levels appropriate to many pieces of work. The situation in English is particularly worrying since it is a vital subject which was praised for the quality of its feedback and use of national curriculum levels in the school's previous inspection report.
45. The school has not fully developed strategies for improvement of pupils' literacy and numeracy across all subjects of the curriculum. The teaching of these important skills is not prepared in a consistent way and is mostly non-existent, except in English and mathematics lessons where it is generally satisfactory.
46. The school has recently introduced a system for setting long-term targets for each student and a monitoring process whereby progress towards these targets is reported to parents each term. Some teachers are beginning to make good use of the assessment data with which they are provided and ensure that both their teaching and the students' learning is directed towards meeting the targets. A few teachers, however, pay insufficient attention to the information that is available and learning is not as rapid as it could be, particularly, for the most able, for example, in English, science, ICT and RE. In most subject areas, students need to be set specific, achievable short-term topic-related targets as well as their longer-term targets, which are usually expressed in test levels or examination grades.
47. Another area of inconsistency is the setting of homework. Students are provided with

a homework diary in which to record the work they are set. In the majority of diaries scrutinised during the inspection, it was rare to find more than four or five homeworks being set each week. Some lower-attaining students had even fewer. Sometimes students received homework but failed to record it in their diaries. Nevertheless, the amount of homework received by most students falls far below that expected by parents. The content of the homeworks also varied enormously. For example, in some subjects, such as art, the homework is demanding and a positive learning experience. In other subjects, some of the homework was finishing off classwork. In this situation, those students who worked fastest in class had little to do and a learning opportunity was missed.

48. The teaching of students with special educational needs within the learning support base, where they work in small groups or on individual programmes is always good. The quality of teaching of students with special educational needs across specialist subject lessons is generally satisfactory or better but on occasions is unsatisfactory. When teaching and learning is good, lessons are well planned to take account of different abilities and targets on individual education plan. The teachers are well informed both about the individual needs of students and the appropriate strategies to use in meeting those needs. Also, attention to gradual 'step-by-step' instructions and learning is summarised at the end of a lesson. This teaching involves much encouragement and positive feedback to motivate students. Staff intervene and manage behaviour well and maintain good relationships with students whilst setting high expectations. There is careful planning of how to use additional adults in the classroom. Examples of such strategies were seen in a design and technology lesson, where a student with a visual disability was given adult support with practical work and in an art lesson where the teacher used knowledge of an individual student to target particular encouragement and provide step by step instructions.
49. In those lessons where the teaching of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory it is because teachers fail to match learning tasks and resources appropriately to students' needs and they are unaware of individual education plans and their targets. The use made by teachers of individual education plans varies across subjects and teachers do not always make best use of teaching assistants when planning lessons. Where teaching offers little or no challenge and teachers' poor behaviour management strategies are weak, students do not concentrate well and sometimes disrupt learning.
50. Teaching assistants are generally used to very good effect in lessons to ensure student participation and progress. The learning support assistant team is knowledgeable both about the individual needs of students and the correct strategies to use, for example, when supporting reading and writing in design and technology lessons, supporting behaviour in English, helping students to concentrate in modern languages or helping students access the internet in Skillpower sessions. Teaching assistants contribute assessing students' success in meeting targets on individual education plans.

Sixth form

51. Teaching is a major strength of the sixth form provision. It is never less than satisfactory and most teaching is good or better. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of their subjects to provide clear explanations, often illustrated by a range of relevant examples or supported by demonstrations, which help students to grasp ideas quickly. For example, in a human biology lesson the teacher made good use of models of chromosomes to illustrate chromosome mutation and in mathematics lessons teachers explained complex mathematical concepts skilfully.
52. Lessons are usually planned well with clear statements of what the students will learn

during the lesson. Most teachers explain these to the students at the start of the lesson so that students know how the lesson will progress and what they will gain from it. This clarity helps students to assess the progress that they have made and

contributes positively to their learning. The content of the lesson usually provides an appropriate level of challenge in relation to the demands of the course, although occasionally at AS level opportunities to add rigour by introducing more demanding work are missed.

53. Teaching in psychology, business studies, sociology and design and technology is very strong. In these subjects and in many other good lessons across the sixth form teachers use challenging questions skilfully to engage students in class discussions and to encourage them to think critically. Students are encouraged to contribute their own ideas and to discuss these in small groups, often presenting well their ideas to the class. This involvement in lessons helps to sustain students' interest and enthusiasm. For example, in an A level psychology lesson the teacher used case studies and role play very effectively to develop students' understanding of schizophrenia, and in a sociology lesson students were given the opportunity to analyse critically different newspapers' approaches to reporting crimes.
54. In a small proportion of lessons, teachers adopt a lecturing style with little involvement by the students other than answering an occasional question. In these lessons the narrow range of learning fails to sustain the students' interest fully although they invariably remain attentive and keen to learn.
55. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students feel able to approach their teachers when they need help and such requests receive a positive response. Teachers sometimes provide this help at lunchtimes or after school. The biology department has held revision days for students at weekends and in the holidays. Teachers also make good provision for students with special educational needs. These students receive very good support from teachers, often during lessons on a one to one basis, and make good progress in their learning. These students are also supported more widely within the sixth form centre.
56. Teachers usually mark students' work weekly although in a few cases marking is less frequent. Marking is generally thorough and most subject teachers provide corrections and write encouraging comments. In some subjects teachers provide students with advice about how they can improve the standard of their work, but this good practice is not consistent across all subjects.
57. Resources to support independent study are available within departments and, increasingly, within the sixth form centre study area. Homework is set regularly and most students complete this to an appropriate standard. This homework is usually well matched to the work covered in class and to the demands of the examinations, but in some subjects the need for students to extend their study beyond the work set is not emphasised sufficiently. In some subjects, such as business studies, this aspect of sixth form study is emphasised and longer-term assignments provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their research, analysis and writing skills. However, for a small number of students, who are not yet sufficiently mature to take responsibility for their own learning, subject teachers are not always sufficiently rigorous in insisting on the standard and completion of written class work and homework.
58. Good planning to meet special needs continues into the sixth form where good teaching and careful support result in students making good progress and being fully

involved in lessons.

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

59. The school provides its students with a broad curriculum with a number of interesting features. In Years 7 to 9 the inclusion of dance is both unusual and a strength. In Years 10 and 11 the inclusion of business studies and “Skill Power” adds breadth and emphasises the inclusive design of a curriculum aimed to engage all students. The socially inclusive structure of the curriculum accords with the school's stated aims. It is reinforced by the curriculum shape in Years 10 and 11 which contains a standard content of 80 per cent of the time that all students must follow.
60. Up to and including Year 9, the school's curriculum meets statutory requirements fully. Although the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has strengths it does not meet statutory requirements on a number of counts. These are a failure to meet fully requirements for ICT, RE and careers education. Throughout the school there is a failure to provide a daily collective act of worship for all students. The school is aware of these shortcomings.
61. Equality of opportunity was identified as a strength in the previous inspection. This good record has been sustained. For example, posts of responsibility are now more representative of gender and race, providing positive role models for students. The school ensures that students have both equality of opportunity and of regard. An assembly on Martin Luther King encouraged students to think deeply about equal rights.
62. The option choice available for Years 10 and 11 has been extended to meet a wider range in students' needs and a large percentage of students now have the chance to study business. The school caters for a wide range of learning needs and provides individual occupational placements for some students at college.
63. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving the quality of the school's timetable. Few classes are taught by several teachers and the two week timetable provides an equitable share of time for subjects.
64. The structuring of the timetable in humanities is slightly unusual. In Years 7, 8 and 9 some students receive two lessons of history and geography whilst others receive one. The time allocation for the classes which have only one lesson is barely adequate to meet statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11 the school requirement for all students to study humanities is both a strength and a weakness. It restricts student choice but reflects a strength of the school and so promotes high rates of students' attainment. Currently the school offers an integrated humanities GCSE, rather than separate GCSEs in history, geography and RE. The school is aware that there is a need to review sixth form progression into GCE 'A' level history, geography and RE.
65. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in providing a range of opportunities for work-related education for students in Years 10 and 11. The 'Skillpower' programme is carefully planned and meets the needs of individual students well. 'Skillpower' is very effective in enabling students to be independent

learners and to take responsibility for what they learn. For example, having carried out research in local playgroups, Year 10 students created innovative designs which they made into toys to take back to the playgroups to test on 'consumers'. The programme is successful in enabling students to have the confidence and interest to continue learning at age 16, studying vocational courses, or gaining employment.

66. About half the students in Years 10 and 11 study GCSE business. Students are interested to learn about business and consider the risks involved in financial investment, frequently relating these to their own experiences. This business understanding has provided a good basis for a number of students to enter the national ProShare competition and achieve the top ranking.
67. The personal, social and health education programme covers the requirements for education relating to health, sex and relationships and the dangers of the misuse of drugs. The programme also includes personal and social development, citizenship and careers education. The non-specialist teaching team is strengthened by a good range of visitors who provide specialist support to teachers on such issues as drug misuse, arson and domestic crime. Out-of-school agencies such as 'Actions for Communities in Rural England' provide effective opportunities for the development of citizenship. The school plans to introduce The Healthy Schools Award.
68. The time given for careers education is unsatisfactory. Careers education is provided in Years 7-11 for three hours per year as part of the personal and social education programme, with additional time for work experience in Year 10. The programme for careers is relatively limited in its scope and, together with the restricted time, constitutes inadequate provision. The shortened lunch hour also reduces opportunities for contributions from external speakers. The careers library has some useful reference books, but has few other resources and does not provide sufficiently for students' needs.
69. The delivery of social education is good. The school sets out to be socially inclusive in its approach. This is immediately apparent in its brochures, prospectus and departmental documentation and is evident in the generally good relationships that are a hallmark of the school. The school is aware that it is a part of the wider community. It draws on that community heavily; in the week of inspection several outside speakers were observed working with students. The school also supports the wider community, for example, by regular fund raising for charity. The care and interest shown by staff in the learning support department for students, the role models staff provide and the ethos set and atmosphere created within the department's support base throughout the day, contributes to appropriate social behaviour and demonstrates a caring, community based approach. The department also does good work in enabling the reintegration of students who have had attendance or behaviour problems.
70. The delivery of moral education is very good. The school works hard to ensure that students understand the difference between right and wrong. This is consistently witnessed in the taught curriculum and reinforced by means of the pastoral system. School assemblies are well planned, well coordinated and of excellent standard. An assembly delivered the theme 'My Hero – Muhammad Ali' was inspirational. Another on Martin Luther King was of similar standard. These assemblies focused students on a range of moral issues including the American Civil Rights struggle. The work of

the learning support department in discussing and addressing behaviour and developing pastoral support programmes supports both social and moral education.

71. Spiritual development remains weak. The opportunity afforded by a daily corporate act of worship is not being exploited adequately. Although some good and very good examples of spiritual development were seen, teachers do not make full use of the opportunities available in their disciplines to inspire, for example, a sense of awe and wonder in their students.
72. The standard of cultural education is good. Cultural matters are given a high profile. As a means of providing multi-cultural experiences the school is involved in the Japanese Internship Programme whereby, at no cost to the school's budget a Japanese national is based in the school. The intern has been deployed in a variety of ways. She is currently assisting with dance. As a consequence a heightened awareness of Japanese culture now exists amongst many students. Another example of good practice is a display in the library, made by Year 8 students, of models of north African mosques. Sadly, the impact of other high quality displays, for example, the excellent one entitled 'Art from Around the World', is lessened by the impression created by litter, graffiti, minor vandalism and poorly maintained buildings in the immediate vicinity of the display. The modern languages department is developing links with France. Although as yet there is no student exchange, there are day trips and residential trips to France and a flourishing community exchange.
73. Students with special educational needs are given good support and have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, and the full range of National Curriculum subjects and accreditation. The school has an inclusive approach in maintaining SEN pupils in mainstream classes and where pupils are withdrawn from lessons for additional help the sessions are carefully planned in order to keep disturbances to the normal curriculum to a minimum. Where full advantage is taken of teaching assistants to provide additional focused help in lessons the progress pupils make is improved. Planning for a range of learning needs is clearly influencing teaching in some specialist subjects but not in all.
74. Good links are made with contributory schools and there is good liaison with local Further Education colleges for students with special educational needs. The use of the City and Guilds Skillpower Diploma as an option in Years 10 and 11 for students with special needs is a major contributor to the progress and success of those students. The sessions are well taught and supported and students make substantial gains in confidence and independent work skills. The programme provides a very useful stepping stone to further education.
75. The provision for gifted and talented students includes the school being affiliated to the National Association for Able Children in Education and its participation in "THEM", a Northamptonshire Local Education Authority project for the more able. This has primarily involved sending identified pupils in the Years 7, 8 and 9 to a number of high quality impact days when they work with similar students from other local education authority schools. Students are identified by means of testing; tracking profiles have been set up but there is currently insufficient time for individual students to be interviewed on a termly basis. The school recognises it has some way to go to embed into its day-to-day curriculum practice that best supports them. Although lesson plans identified the most able and there were some examples of them being challenged by expert questioning by the teacher this was not the usual practice. In the majority of lessons insufficient provision was made for the most able. In Years 10 and 11 extension activities at lunchtime are made available on an invitation basis to more able students.
76. ICT is now under new leadership in the school and progress in both learning and

provision is being made at a good rate. In Years 8 and 9 pupils are focused on vocational courses, which fail to provide an appropriate breadth of study. This is currently being rationalised. In Years 10 and 11 ICT is not taught as a separate subject and there is insufficient activity across the curriculum to guarantee national curriculum entitlement for all students. There is use of ICT across the curriculum to support learning, but this generally lacks coherence. Encouragement for students to use ICT to support their learning far outweighs planned activities.

77. There is a good example of where the teaching of ICT is planned and practised within design and technology. Here students experience a programme from Year 7 through to Year 9, having studied control technology, two-dimensional design and a computer aided design and manufacture process. Higher-attainers in Year 9 use design software to produce good working orthographic designs of a mirror stand. Middle-attainers use the same software to produce satisfactory plans. In Year 10 and 11, students make regular use of a food analysis program in food technology. Two-dimensional design software is used to good effect by Year 10 students who follow the Skills Power programme of study. The majority of departments have not completed effective staff training to improve information communication technology skills through the New Opportunities Funded training. The initiative has not so far had a significant impact on learning.
78. Computers are freely available in the library and these are used by students at lunch time to follow personal interests. A computer room is open each lunchtime and students make good use of this. This provision has a good impact on learning. There is no systematic approach for development of information handling skills beyond a short Year 7 induction programme which covers basic library skills. The library provides good access to the Internet. However, a very high proportion of books in the library are over ten years old, which limits the library as an effective learning resource.
79. There is good provision of extra-curricular activities in the school. Particular areas of strength include PE and music. Since the last inspection there are more bands, choirs and instrumental groups that now include pupils from the main school and sixth form. Extra-curricular programmes are well structured to enable younger and more experienced players to work together before feeding into the senior groups. The school enjoys an annual programme of concerts and musicals produced by the creative arts faculty. Students also participate each year in the Northampton Music Festival. In PE there is an excellent programme which is supported by a large number of participants. An interesting feature is boys' dance. There is a good lunchtime programme that includes netball, table tennis, dance and girls' football. A very good feature of the extra-curricular programme is the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. This is open to students from Year 9 upwards. It is an excellent link between the main school and the sixth form. It involves approximately 100 students who are preparing for the Award at bronze, silver and gold levels. The quality of the whole extra-curricular programme is a fine testimony to the commitment of the staff.
80. The school's links with its contributory primary schools and the liaison arrangements that are in place to promote smooth cross-phase transition and a continuity of learning and progression are a strength of the school. There are regular meetings between Wollaston staff and the staff of the primary schools. Information is shared on both academic and pastoral matters. Liaison with the mathematics department was described as being outstanding by the headteacher of a primary school. Primary school pupils are regularly invited into Wollaston School, for example, to see expressive arts productions. During the process of induction Year 7 students are supported by a 'buddy system' based on support provided by sixth form students. A cross phase coordinator is in post and her work is viewed by primary colleagues as

having raised standards of liaison. Primary school pupils feel confident to transfer to Wollaston School.

Sixth form

81. The curriculum serves the needs of students well. Although it has been designed to provide students with the highest possible level of choice of courses the school has recognised there is a need to extend further the opportunities for students to follow vocational courses. In the sixth form there is also a failure to comply with the requirement to provide for RE and a daily collective act of worship. The delivery of key skills has not been ensured and this is a weakness.
82. In the sixth form a good range of advanced level courses is offered, including vocational business studies and leisure and tourism. In most cases the timetabling of these subjects enables students to combine their first choice of subjects. The range of advanced level courses has been increased in recent years in response to students' needs. For example, GCE A levels in human biology, information and communications technology and physical education have been added. Provision in business studies is particularly good and includes courses at intermediate and advanced level.
83. Although information and communications technology has been offered in the past, currently there is no planned provision for students to develop further the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology. This lack of provision impacts most where the student or the school has identified the student's need to reach a basic minimum level in one or more of these skills.
84. In the sixth form provision of careers education for those students planning to go to university is very good and includes opportunities to make visits to university open days and to speak with former students who are now at university. The local careers company is increasingly providing good support for those students who plan to enter work when they leave the sixth form and there are examples of good support for these students from mentors and other staff. However, planning and the provision of resources to support students seeking employment are recognised by the school as areas for further improvement.
85. Since the last inspection the profile of the PE department has risen with the incorporation of dance into the physical education programme, thereby enhancing in particular the post 16 examination provision, the introduction of examinations at both GCSE and Post 16 and improvements in the quality of teaching. The curriculum is evolving and is broad in all years, however, the recent timetabled provision for post 16 students is somewhat narrow and restrictive.
86. The sixth form provides a wide range of opportunities outside the taught timetable which enrich the students' experiences and contribute very significantly to their social, moral and cultural development. For example, students are involved in a range of musical activities including participation in bands, choirs and instrumental groups. Some students conduct junior ensembles and assist in lessons as part of their work enrichment programme. In addition students help support pupils with learning difficulties in the 11-16 section of the school and assist in local nursery and primary schools. The work that students carry out in raising money for charities, including 'Rag Week', provides excellent opportunities for their social and moral development. Provision for students' spiritual development is more limited and is only just satisfactory.

87. Good planning to meet special needs continues into the sixth form, where good teaching and careful support result in students making good progress and being fully involved in lessons.
88. The sixth form has close links with University College, Northampton and is developing links with a number of universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

COMMUNITY LINKS

89. The school has good links with both the local and wider community and makes an impressive commitment to extending the links with the community it serves.
90. The community service programme in the sixth form is a very good example of community education in action. Students, as part of their enrichment programme, support local hospitals, residential homes, and nurseries; coach at local sports clubs, organise tournaments, act as Reading Partners and support adults with special needs. The students organise an annual Rag Week featuring a wide range of community activities and which in 2001 raised over £1800 for Macmillan Cancer Relief. The school also has a flourishing and well managed Duke of Edinburgh Programme, starting in Year 9, with students in the sixth form undertaking a wide range of activities as part of the award. Discussing the programme with students in Years 12 and 13 it was clear how important they regard it, as another opportunity to support the community and to develop for themselves a broad range of skills and experiences.
91. Relationships with local businesses are increasingly productive and underpin the school aims; for example, practical support is given to the school work-related programme and the Young Enterprise initiative; an annual mock interview programme for sixth form students run by the local Rotary Club; and a group of sixth form students recently won a local Business Management Challenge. In GNVQ ICT a link has been established with over fifty local companies, enhancing students' awareness of the application of ICT in a business context.
92. The school has a good reputation in the community for its music, drama and dance performances, and during the inspection a boys dance group RAGE were seen rehearsing for a performance at the Northants Arts Festival. This reputation is further strengthened by inviting experts into the school to give talks and performances. Visits and residential trips are popular to places in both the UK and abroad, and support the social and cultural development of those involved.
93. The physical education department have numerous links which help in broadening the curriculum, extending the skills and encouraging students to see participation in leisure and sport as a life long process. Good links have been established with local clubs including rugby, cricket, swimming. There is a recent exciting development involving Rushden and Diamonds football club and students with special needs. In addition the department has achieved the Sportsmark award for a second time and has very good extra-curricular provision for PE and sport.
94. The school has good links with other educational establishments helping the transfer between stages of education, for example SEN links between the school and contributory primary schools over inclusion decisions, and a joint science project between students at school and local primary children. Links with local colleges for post 16 learning are also good.
95. Community Links support the aim of the school to be 'working with the wider community' and progress since the last inspection has been good. However the individual programmes would benefit from co-ordination and the development of a

strategy to create community education to maximise the benefits to the students, the school and the wider community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

96. The school makes sound provision for the safety and welfare of its students. Fire precautions are good and safe practices are followed in subject departments. The welfare of students is not improved by the amount of litter, including food waste, on the site and by the poor condition of some toilets. Procedures for monitoring and promoting high attendance and good behaviour are effective, partly as a result of the recent strengthening of the teams responsible for student welfare. The management of behaviour is usually effective, though it is less so with a small minority of students in Years 10 and 11. Child protection arrangements are in line with local requirements and are satisfactory. Drugs education and sex and relationships education are effectively covered within the school's personal and social education programme. Liaison with primary schools is good and transfer arrangements for new students are especially effective, for example the provision of sixth form 'buddies' to help youngsters to settle quickly in their new surroundings.
97. The analysis of students' performance data and potential is thorough in most subjects. Students are assessed on entry and targets for future attainments are developed for each individual. These targets form the basis for departmental evaluation of performance. Students are then assessed twice yearly for attainment and effort and there is an annual review of departmental performance in public examinations. However, the quality of monitoring and subsequent support varies within faculties. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment data, for example, in providing work of different levels to match student needs or as a means of adjusting lesson plans. Examples of effective support and guidance are found in ICT, art and for students with special educational needs. Provision of support and guidance is less helpful in, for example, English, science and mathematics. Frequently the weakness lies in the absence of short term targets necessary to support progress towards longer-term targets. There is also insufficient planning to meet the needs of more able students, who need more challenging tasks to enable them to reach their potential. However, the issues relating to monitoring of progress and use of assessment raised in the previous inspection have, as yet, not been fully resolved.
98. The monitoring of, and support for, students' personal development is good. Students know and accept the good systems that have been developed for rewarding good behaviour and dealing with misbehaviour. The implementation of these systems is managed inconsistently by some teachers but when applied fully they are effective. Good records are maintained and initiatives such as the 'crisis' patrol help the school to provide a speedy response to personal or medical crises. Parents are involved at an appropriate stage where concerns exist and provide additional support. Guidance and advice on careers is not satisfactory, with students receiving only about three hours of support a year in this area.
99. There is a clear and effective structure for the identification and assessment of special educational needs, which conforms to the code of practice guidance. Planning for the transition to the new special educational needs code of practice is under consideration but is not part of any formal school development planning.
100. The school maintains records of statement reviews, individual education plans and contributions from outside agencies for students with special educational needs, where these are available. Links with primary schools ensure a smooth transfer for students who have problems already identified. Assessment information on students at entry is well used in combination with school assessment information to identify

levels of need and the support required. The learning support department provides a great deal of pastoral and welfare support for special needs students as part of its operation. Liaison with outside agencies such as the education welfare service is good.

SIXTH FORM

101. Assessment of attainment and progress is regular and the information is readily available to students, who know the level at which they are working as well as their target grades in A level and GNVQ subjects.
102. Mentors and the centre manager provide excellent, and much appreciated, personal support to students. The matching of this guidance to students' needs means that students receive additional support at the times during their course when this is needed most. Students rightly prefer this arrangement to the previous form tutor system that was less flexible. Mentors discuss students' progress with them but there is an insufficiently strong focus by mentors on what needs to be done to raise current attainment to target levels.
103. Annual reports contain good advice on strategies for improvement though this is less often true of interim reports, where the teachers' comment is not always required. Careers guidance for those going to university is very good but it is less satisfactory for those students not going to university.
104. The system of registration used in the sixth form not only provides good monitoring of attendance but also gives more responsibility to students. Its effectiveness can be seen in the high level of attendance in the sixth form.
105. The support for students is greatly enhanced by the very good study facilities provided by the school. Good catering facilities are also provided by this school, which is an example of the high level of personal support available to students from sixth form staff. The permanent centre manager ensures that students enjoy a well-maintained study centre and is a much-appreciated trained counsellor.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

106. Most parents hold positive views of many aspects of the school's work. In particular, they feel that the school is approachable and has high expectations of its students. They also feel that their children like school, make good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. They consider teaching to be good.
107. Some negative views were expressed about homework, behaviour, information on students' progress, the closeness with which the school works with parents and the high staff turnover.
108. The inspection team broadly agree with the positive opinions of parents, though the expectations of the more able students should be higher and students make satisfactory, rather than good, progress. Homework is set inconsistently and the behaviour of some 14 to 16 year-olds is sometimes disruptive. Links with parents are good, though the school is sometimes slow to respond to parents' concerns. Inspectors do not agree with the criticism of information about students' progress, finding this to be of very good quality. The team agree that there has been a high staff turnover, for example, in English and mathematics, and whilst the school has used this opportunity well to appoint staff of good quality, the disruption caused to the continuity in teaching has had an adverse effect on students learning and progress.

109. The school has good links with parents which has been much improved since the previous inspection. There are at least three formal contacts with parents each year, at which attendance is satisfactory. Parents are properly involved when the school has a concern about a student and there is good follow-up on attendance and behavioural issues. Parents are also invited to evening meetings related to induction of new students, option choices, transition to Year 11 and the sixth form and careers. The school canvasses parents' views through a questionnaire at every consultation evening and has acted upon these, for example with the change to a split consultation evening for each year group, to give parents more time for discussion with teachers. As a result of all this, and through feedback via reports and student planners, parents have good opportunities to have a positive effect on the work of the school. However, both teachers and parents need to make more use of the opportunities presented by the student planners as a potentially effective form of communication.
110. Provision of information to parents is good. As well as regular newsletters, there is a particularly good prospectus, the governors' annual report is comprehensive, yet easy to read, and annual reports on students' progress are now highly informative. These reports contain all statutory data on standards reached, useful advice to the students on how to improve and comments on personal development. In addition, parents receive interim reports annually containing effort and attainment grades. The governors' annual report and student reports were criticised in the previous inspection and are now greatly improved.
111. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is satisfactory. They contribute material and transport for art, design and technology and for extra-curricular learning opportunities. The School Association raises valuable funds to provide additional resources for the school.
112. The school has strong links with parents of students with special educational needs and they are kept informed about their child's progress. Attendance at annual reviews, and pastoral support programme meetings is extremely high with just over half attending each individual education plan reviews. There is good liaison with parents of students with special educational needs at admission in Year 7.

SIXTH FORM STUDENTS' VIEWS

113. Almost all sixth form students completed a pre-inspection questionnaire. Their responses were extremely positive in nearly every respect. More than 90 per cent of students felt satisfied that their teachers were approachable, the help they received to settle into the Sixth Form and the quality and challenge in the teaching. Over 80 per cent were happy with the availability of courses, course information, progress information, encouragement to study and research independently, their own enjoyment, the school's response to their views, their treatment as adults, assessment practices and extra-curricular activities. Inspectors agree with these positive opinions although they felt that the provision of advice and guidance, on how to ensure progress towards targets, could be improved.
114. Some students felt that the advice they received in Year 11 about what they should do in the Sixth Form was not helpful. Many felt that they have not received good careers advice in the Sixth Form. Inspectors judged that there were shortcomings in careers advice in Year 11 and for those in the Sixth Form not planning to attend university.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

115. The headteacher has a realistic and honest view of the school and has formulated a long-term vision for its future development. The inspectors agree that this vision is very well expressed and that his leadership provides a clear direction for the school.

The school aims and priorities are clearly stated and focus on providing students with opportunities to achieve their full potential. These are further supported in the school brochure by a clear and concise statement of the headteacher's vision, what the school stands for, and how a climate is being created where learning can flourish.

116. Since the last inspection the school has been in a period of transition and under the headteacher's leadership, has become very popular with parents and students. It is now oversubscribed. To enable the school fully to meet the challenges arising from this period of change and to fulfil the school aims, the headteacher has undertaken a restructuring of the senior management team. Clear roles and responsibilities underpin this well planned and revised senior management structure. The team is still very new but is starting to make an impact on the overall leadership of the school. A key challenge for the team is translating the longer-term vision of the headteacher into shorter-term action to make carefully staged progress in improvements.
117. School development planning involves an extensive management exercise, which includes staff from all levels in reviewing previous plans and using performance data to identify areas for improvement to address. Part of this activity includes a consultation process with staff and governors and draws on the views of parents and students. The 2000-2002 development plan contains much detail and covers a very wide range of issues. However, the size and range of the plan makes it difficult for the school to clearly prioritise and focus on the key areas requiring attention. Tasks are not concisely stated or articulated to ensure that all staff are clear about how to bring about improvement in standards. The plan identifies some monitoring and evaluation of outcomes but these are not always precise and it does not sufficiently address the need for staged reviews to assess the quality of progress being made. This lack of continuous review has made it difficult for the school to assess how well it is performing day to day in relation to the tasks, the consistency of approach, where further attention is required and the impact of actions taken on improving the quality of education or standards. Not all staff know and understand their role or their responsibilities in ensuring tasks and procedures are followed and, as a result, this has led to an inconsistency of approaches. Also, until recently, the school did not have effective line management and accountability systems to ensure that the development plan was being fully or consistently implemented. These systems are now in place and are beginning to have an impact.
118. This inconsistency in implementing policies and procedures is the major issue for the school to achieve at all levels, especially at middle management. Leadership and management, although often good, is not consistently so. Delegation of leadership and management responsibilities throughout the school has proven difficult as not all middle and senior managers have had a clear and consistent view of their roles and functions. Some middle managers have been effective in raising standards and there are examples of well-run and organised faculties. However, more consistency is required if middle managers are to fulfil their key role in both bringing about further progress in the achievement of higher standards and addressing cross school issues such as literacy, numeracy, marking and homework. Not all teachers are sufficiently aware of their responsibility for achieving consistency in stretching students of all abilities, behaviour management, ensuring high levels of expectation of students in and around the school and raising achievement. There is also a need for issues to be addressed by all staff consistently at the appropriate level. This would ensure senior managers and the headteacher are not overburdened by excessive detail and lose the capacity to deal effectively with strategic issues.
119. The last inspection identified the need to increase consistency in management and in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Recently, the headteacher has started to address this in a number of ways. A performance management policy, developed and implemented is beginning to provide a more systematic approach to monitoring of

the quality of teaching including observation of lessons. However, there are still inconsistencies in its operation. This has been accompanied in the school by a debate about good practice. Within the restructured senior management team the curriculum directors are starting to work in partnership with heads of faculty to develop further this process. In addition, monitoring has been undertaken by the LEA inspection team and the outcomes fed into the review system. These strategies are going some way to address the previous inspection issue, have started to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and have the potential to promote further improvement. However, roles and responsibilities, in relation to monitoring and evaluation, need to be fully developed and implemented consistently at each level of management. The outcomes of monitoring need to be acted upon by all staff.

120. The governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work and play a full part in forward planning. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school. He knows the school well and is in regular communication with the headteacher. The professional working relationship established between the headteacher and chair of governors is a strength of the school. Through their governing body meetings and the work of the committees the governors work together to challenge and support the school and to help shape its direction. As a group, and as individuals, they are well informed and through their actions they not only challenge but also give positive leadership. Key strengths in the work of the governors include the effectiveness of the committee chairmen and their committees and their ability to gather and act upon data and information. There are good links between governors and faculties and governors know the school well. They are informed both by regular reports and by their own visits to the school. Overall, the governors fulfil their statutory requirements except for ensuring some aspects of the curriculum provision and the implementation of the act of collective worship.
121. Since the last inspection the school has experienced a steady rise in the number of students, and this compared with the nature of the school buildings and site, has not made financial planning an easy task for the headteacher and governors. However, they have performed their responsibilities well. The school manages and administers its budget efficiently. Strategic financial planning is also efficient with financial priorities being clearly related to the school aims and to the development plan. There is a match of spending to priorities and the school is able to track the use of additional funds. Governors are active in discussing financial matters and committees are effective in linking spending decisions to educational priorities in their areas. Decisions made by the senior management, administrative staff and governors display value for money and increasingly best value is achieved. The governors have been active in receiving training and guidance on best value and the finance sub-committee has discussed this in relation to Audit Commission guidelines.
122. The constantly rising number of students has put a severe strain on both the capacity and quality of the school buildings and environment. In 2000, the standard number of students to be admitted each year rose from 210 to 240. Although a building programme was designed to enable the school to cater for increased numbers this programme is at present incomplete. This results in the school being overcrowded, especially in key corridor areas. Dining facilities are inadequate and there is a lack of classrooms. This necessitates the use of a large number of mobile classrooms, some of which are of poor quality. The governors and management team are aware of the issues and are working hard to solve them, but much of the solution is beyond their immediate control and rests with the completion of the building plan.

123. There are other issues relating to the buildings and site that are within the control of the governors, management and staff. The site is dirty, untidy, strewn with litter and discarded food and is not always treated with respect. As a result the school is not providing an environment either conducive to supporting the quality of teaching and learning which is evident, or to the raising of standards. It is recognised that the school has experienced major recruitment difficulties in setting up a site management team and employing the required amount of cleaners. However, the governors need as a matter of urgency to resolve the long running issue in relation to day to day site management and the provision of adequate toilet facilities for students. Senior management is not yet addressing the issues in relation to provision of an environment which support high quality education and standards. For example, students need to become more aware and involved in caring for the school environment by not dropping litter and food in classrooms, corridors and the school site, not causing minor damage to the fabric of classrooms and not producing graffiti. Staff are not always as rigorous as they should be in taking action to support senior management in developing this awareness with students, encouraging them to become involved in caring for the school environment and enforcing school rules consistently.
124. The school has sufficient teaching staff and is well supported by its non-teaching staff apart from the quality of site management. However the school in the last two years has been experiencing difficulties in relation to a very large turnover of teaching staff and recruitment issues in key departments, for example English, ICT and mathematics. The headteacher has put much work and effort into trying to solve these issues and has managed very well a large and complex recruitment programme at the same time as undertaking necessary management team restructuring. An outcome of his successful work include the development of good relationships between staff and the enthusiasm and vigour displayed by the majority of teachers coupled with a shared commitment to succeed. In addition, last year the school achieved the Investors in People Award. However, staffing issues still remain in some areas including English, mathematics and ICT, and amongst non-teaching staff in relation to site management. Although the school overall now has an improved staff, the situation during the last two years has adversely affected building and developing management teams, faculty teams and consistency in the quality of teaching and its effects on standards.
125. Resources in the school to support the curriculum are satisfactory in many subjects in range and quality but there are areas where this is not the case. There are insufficient resources in English, mathematics, music, SEN, RE, careers and the school library. The library makes a limited contribution to learning, although the librarian does prepare boxes of books for departments from the school and from School Library Service stock on request. The use of book boxes removes opportunities for students to develop retrieval skills. The library is well resourced with computers which are linked to the Internet. The number of books is broadly appropriate for the age range 11 to 16, but the average age of the stock is high, which reduces the library's value as a resource. The English department makes regular use of the library for the changing of books, but the library is not well used to support the development of literacy across all aspects of the curriculum. The librarian organises a range of activities through the course of the year which are designed to promote reading for pleasure. These include book clubs, fairs, competitions, world poetry and world book day.
126. Teachers' professional development is focused on raising standards and is closely linked to the priorities in the development plan. Identification of needs for individual staff training is the responsibility of the heads of faculty, and these are appropriately identified from the performance management reviews with teachers. The curriculum director negotiates professional development funding with heads of faculties and is

responsible for the monitoring of impact and value for money. As yet the school has not fully used the standards fund monies for training for literacy and numeracy. Full use has not been made of the new Opportunities Funding for ICT.

127. Leadership and management of the learning support department is good and plays a key role in supporting and embodying school's aims and values. The decision to adopt an inclusive ethos with regard to students with special educational needs reflects good practice. The special needs coordinator has been instrumental in creating and developing a clear direction for special needs provision in the school which is reflected in the special educational needs policy. There is a strong team spirit within the department and the experienced staff are deployed well. Governors are kept informed of the school's practice in relation to their responsibilities. The school's budget expenditure for meeting special educational needs is targeted appropriately to support students.
128. The rest of the teachers receive detailed and practical advice on the range of needs that they may encounter and strategies to employ with students with special educational needs. However, this advice is not always translated into practice. The special needs co-ordinator is not involved in a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching of students with special educational needs across the school. In order to inform and refine future decisions concerning the development of learning support strategies, there needs to be a methodical gathering of more focused information on the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs across the school in a range of lessons.
129. The way that the accommodation is used by the learning support department creates a welcoming and pleasant, settled environment for students and staff alike, but it is beginning to be restrictive at peak times when adults, groups and individuals, sometimes with conflicting needs, are using the support base.
130. Resources and equipment in the learning support base are neatly and tidily displayed and clearly labelled for use. However, they need to be updated and expanded to give better learning options and so improve their effectiveness. Learning resources used to support special needs students in some specialist subjects also need to be assessed to ensure they are effective. Greater use could be made of ICT within the base to support the administration needs of the department and a wider range of learning opportunities for students.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

131. The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear sense of direction for the sixth form. They evaluate standards closely and are clear about the focus of future developments. They are aware of the variation in standards across subjects and have taken a range of actions to improve standards where necessary, including the appointment of staff with sixth form experience and expertise at this level. With the exception of the lower results in 2000, this has led to an significant upward trend in examination results since the previous inspection.
132. The head of sixth form and his deputies provide high quality day-to-day management of the sixth form. They have established excellent working relationships with students. They evaluate students' achievements closely through regular progress reports from teaching staff. Students are helped to do their best and to have equal access to the opportunities provided.

133. The centre manager ensures that the sixth form centre is a place where students can work during their private study time and provides excellent support for students, which ranges from advice on personal matters to help with applications.
134. The governors have a sound grasp of the issues facing the sixth form and fulfil their duties in helping shape its future direction. However, the chair of governors recognises, with the potential growth in sixth form numbers, that the governors will need to become focused on specific sixth form issues if they are to be fully effective in shaping strategic direction in the future. At the present time the sixth form is cost effective, operates within its means, and without subsidy from the main school. It provides satisfactory value for money.
135. The recently built sixth form centre provides an excellent base and working area for students. The sixth form centre has a growing range of resources to support students' study, including access to the internet. The finances which the school receives for the sixth form are used efficiently and cost effectively to support planned developments and students' learning. This includes the provision of reference books to support individual subjects and a wide range of information on universities and other organisations.
136. Sixth form students are usually taught with subject departments in the main school. Accommodation for teaching sixth form students is adequate and in those areas where refurbishment has taken place it is good. However, the accommodation for business is limited and does not reflect business environments. Resources for the teaching of most subjects are good although more resources are needed to support the teaching of English fully.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

137. In order to raise standards further, and to provide a learning environment which supports the good teaching in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should take the following actions:
- (i) Raise standards in all aspects of English, but particularly in writing, by:
- (A) putting in place procedures for ensuring that teachers:
- are familiar with levels of attainment students are achieving on entry to KS3
 - are accurate in their assessments of students' attainment;
 - track students' progress closely;
 - plan lessons that enable students of differing prior attainment to learn effectively;
 - have strategies in place to intervene rapidly when attainment is below expectations;
- (B) ensuring that the scheme of work promotes high attainment in all aspects of the subject through:
- ensuring a better balance of reading and writing,
 - making provision for teaching students how to write, including planning, drafting, proofing and presenting written work
 - teach students the conventions of different types of writing and how to compose writing for a range of purposes and audiences
 - linking closely the teaching of how to read texts with the teaching of how to write them.

- (C) investing in a programme of professional development that promotes consistently high quality teaching in the department by:
- ensuring all teachers have the opportunity to observe the good practice that already exists in the department
 - are familiar with new developments in the teaching of reading and writing
 - have a thorough understanding of the teaching of grammar and its application to improving students' attainment in reading and writing
 - making sure all teachers are familiar with the requirements of the Years 3 to 6 national curriculum and its associated range of teaching methodologies
(Paras 1, 4, 9, 37, 44, 45, 127, 139-156)
- (ii) All staff to have a consistent approach in supporting the headteacher's clear vision and aspirations for the continuing improvement of the school by ensuring that:
- all staff recognise and accept their individual responsibility and accountability for the consistent implementation of policies and procedures
 - all middle managers and teachers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are consistent in fulfilling these
 - all staff are clear about the key priorities for improvement and focus on actions to achieve these
 - all staff manage student behaviour consistently, in line with school expectations by challenging unacceptable behaviour wherever it occurs
 - those key issues not fully met since the last inspection are resolved
(Paras 20, 34, 36, 39, 42, 44, 46, 47, 49, 76, 98, 108, 109, 118, 119, 120)
- (iii) Meet the statutory requirements for careers education, information communication technology and RE in Years 10 and 11 and for the act of collective worship.
(Paras 60, 69, 77, 78, 121, 211-220, 221-232)
- (iv) Improving the school site and buildings by:
- ensuring effective management of the site and buildings
 - raising the standards of cleanliness
 - providing a learning environment to support the good teaching and learning
 - ensuring students become more aware and involved in caring for the school environment
(Paras 19, 22, 97, 123, 124)

Sixth form

- (i) There is a need to monitor more closely those subjects where standards are lower than they should be, to identify clearly the reasons for the lower standards and to take effective steps to improve them. This should include the spreading of good practice from those subjects where standards are high.
(Paras 14, 132)
- (ii) Subject teachers should monitor more closely the standards achieved and completion of work by the minority of students who are not yet ready to take full responsibility for their own learning and insist on completion of work to an appropriate standard.
(Paras 29, 36, 57)
- (iii) Students' attainments in key skills should be assessed more carefully and provision should be made for the development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology to meet their needs.
(Paras 16, 17, 82, 84, 279, 341)
- (iv) Steps should be taken to ensure full compliance with the statutory requirements for

RE and a daily act of worship in the sixth form.
(Paras 82, 84, 121)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	153
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	4	22	65	50	9	2	0
Percentage	3	14	43	33	6	1	0

Sixth form

Number	3	11	23	13	0	0	0
Percentage	6	22	46	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1136	144
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55	3

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	299	3

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year		2001	126	99	225
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	88	97	
	Girls	77	80	83	
	Total	140	168	180	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (75)	75 (75)	80 (75)	
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (26)	49 (50)	44 (36)	
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)	
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	83	98	
	Girls	85	75	88	
	Total	161	158	186	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (81)	70 (73)	83 (85)	
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)	
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (31)	42 (41)	44 (29)	
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)	

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year		2001	88	96	184
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	39	81	87	
	Girls	50	92	92	
	Total	89	173	179	
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (50)	94 (98)	97 (99)	
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)	

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.1 (40.9)
	National	39.9 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A level or AS-level examinations		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	31	28	59
		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations			
		Male	Female	All	
School	Number of candidates	34	31	65	
	Average point score per candidate	14.6	17.5	16	
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5	

For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All

School	Number of candidates	31	28	59	6	7	13
	Average point score per candidate	14.4	17.2	15.7	8.3	8.7	8.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14	93
	National		76

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	8
Indian	7
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1251
Any other minority ethnic group	13

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	65	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Financial information

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	577

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.74
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	22.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	37
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	39
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3063728
Total expenditure	3064630
Expenditure per pupil	2600
Balance brought forward from previous year	56584
Balance carried forward to next year	55682

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1280

Number of questionnaires returned

174

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	52	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	45	7	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	48	22	4	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	53	18	13	1
The teaching is good.	23	59	8	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	47	18	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	44	5	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	45	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	17	57	14	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	43	10	3	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	56	9	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	37	15	5	10

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

ENGLISH

138. Overall, the quality of provision in English is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- The range of teaching styles which promote students' enthusiasm for learning.
- Fast-paced lessons, focused around timed activities, in which students are challenged and stimulated to succeed.
- Relationships between students and teachers that result in a purposeful learning ethos.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of reading and writing, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Consistency of teaching quality, and the elimination of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The assessment of students' attainment.
- The planning of teaching to meet the needs of all students.
- The promotion of higher expectations of what students can be expected to achieve, particularly in writing.
- The development of a scheme of work that promotes progression in learning in all aspects of the national curriculum.

139. In GCSE English Language examinations in 2001, 39 percent of students gained grades A*-C, whereas nationally 60 per cent of students gained A*-C grades. Results for GCSE English Literature in 2001 show that more students attained higher grades than was the case for English Language, but the percentage of students attaining A*-C was lower than nationally, 35 per cent against 56 per cent. The low level of attainment in GCSE examinations is reflected in other evidence seen during the inspection.

140. Results in national tests for 14 year-olds present a slightly more favourable picture. The English department has attained results, which, while significantly below the results of schools with similar intakes of students, have been at, or close to, national averages for the last three years. At age 14, attainment in speaking is good but for the majority of students standards are below national expectations in writing.

141. At the time of the last OFSTED inspection, attainment was at the level expected nationally at ages 14 and 16 and current GCSE results represent a decline from that position. Boys have continued to perform less well than girls and students of higher ability do not yet make the progress that they should. However, effective measures have been taken to reduce the number of classes split between teachers, and although there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching throughout the main school, there is a higher proportion of good and very good teaching than before. The department has experienced very high levels of staff turnover since the last inspection when leadership was judged to be good. The newly appointed head of department offers a courageous and optimistic vision for the future of English in the school.

142. Standards in English during the inspection were overall below average in Years 9 and 11, although they were closer to national expectations in Year 9. Attainment is higher in speaking and listening, but often weak in writing. The standards achieved by students and the progress that they make varies markedly between classes and across year groups, often reflecting the high turnover of teaching staff experienced by many students.

143. In their first three years at school most students become fluent and confident speakers. They are taught how to draw on their thorough knowledge of literary texts to justify choices that they are making and how to substantiate arguments that they are developing. In Year 9, the teacher's persistence in encouraging students to extend their thinking about the difficult issues presented by a study of 'Macbeth' resulted in a debate in which students used an appropriate technical vocabulary in analysing the play's themes, and to which even the most reluctant speakers made relevant contributions. By Year 11 students' assurance as speakers is established. Both boys and girls contribute well to lessons and often volunteer to read aloud, with some flair.
144. Standards in speaking and listening in Year 11 almost always reflect those achieved nationally. In response to teaching which encouraged students to develop and articulate their ideas, the quality and depth of students' answers to questions, and their capacity to sustain discussions, improve markedly. In a Year 10 class studying the play 'A View from the Bridge', students were not told of the exact relationship between characters but asked to speculate what this relationship might turn out to be, by closely studying extracts from the play. Allowed to range freely in their discussions while guided sensitively by the teacher, their responses were authentic, original, and anchored securely in an understanding of the play's language.
145. The majority of students enter the school with a sound grasp of basic reading. This is further developed between the ages of 11 and 14 through the study of literary texts, to which students respond well, in particular being able to offer insights into character and motivation. On occasion students tease out quite complex interpretations of challenging reading. This is well illustrated in a discussion on Lady Macbeth's intentions, when a Year 9 student suggested her words and her actions might be at variance: she might claim to be able to kill her babies but the audience has only her word for that. However, the reading curriculum students are offered is insufficiently wide-ranging and over-privileges the reading of literary texts. As a result students have few reading strategies, beyond skimming and scanning, to help them in coping with demanding non-fiction reading, and this is reflected in skimpy or repetitive responses to non-fiction texts in English in Year 9 and at GCSE level.
146. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what students might be able to achieve. They over-emphasise and over-consolidate the relatively undemanding skill of substantiating opinion with textual evidence, rather than encouraging students to explore, critically evaluate, and above all, relish their reading. Older students in particular sometimes have a joyless experience of books and poems seemingly taught for the sole purpose of being examined. This is at odds with the thorough knowledge of literature and enthusiasm for their subject which teachers bring to their classrooms. In contrast, there is a significant proportion of teaching that uses drama as a means of exploring the text and as a result brings reading vividly to life. For example, a group of students studying 'The Terrible Fate of Humpty Dumpty' progressed rapidly from stilted reading of the text to an animated dramatisation demonstrating comprehension and insight as a direct result of a sequence of drama activities. By the end of Year 11 students do not have a sufficiently broad range of skills to cope with the demanding reading required of them and are too often reliant on interpretations of reading which have been pre-digested by their teachers. This sets a ceiling on attainment at higher levels at GCSE.
147. Students with special educational needs or those who are struggling with basic reading skills are not always well-supported in classes and as a result do not make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers are not always sufficiently aware of their students' difficulties and provision is too often limited to additional support, rather than providing focused teaching, for example, of effective reading strategies.

148. Most students join the school as competent writers but many do not make the progress in writing development of which they are capable. Between the ages of 11 and 14 students consolidate earlier learning and gain new skills in writing in response to literary study. A Year 8 student was able to reflect, in a well-developed essay, on Frankenstein's ambivalence towards his creation. In Year 9 a written response to the novel 'Stone Cold' showed a lively sensibility in imagining the life of an undercover journalist reporting on the lives of London's homeless. However, young writers are not always well-supported by explicit teaching of writing strategies which would enable them to progress further, for example, the skills of planning, drafting, proofing and presenting work, nor are they taught how to shape and structure their writing to meet the requirements of specific tasks and audiences. As a result, progress in writing stalls, and teachers make increasingly fewer demands both in the range of writing they expect students to complete, and of the standards they expect them to achieve. A cycle of under-attainment is thereby established. The work of struggling writers is too often confined to brief comprehension exercises and informal writing, often in a colloquial style. All students complete too little non-fiction writing. Students enter their GCSE studies with too narrow a range of writing skills to cope with the demands of the curriculum. They are not successful in writing essays which demand close analysis of language, or which require an argument to be sustained at length. A promising essay, showing a good understanding of character and motivation, written by a Year 10 student in response to reading 'The Merchant of Venice' faded out at the point where analysis of Shakespeare's language was required. Too often essays show evidence of the teacher's thinking rather than the student's individual response. The writing of both older and younger students is marred by casual errors of syntax, punctuation and spelling and few students construct complex sentences or show awareness of how to vary sentence length for impact on the reader.
149. Teaching is both the key strength and a significant weakness of the department. Learning thrives in lessons where teachers nurture students' imagination, engaging the students' interest through fast-paced teaching and by clear expectations that all students will contribute. In these contexts, students work hard throughout the lessons, demonstrate exemplary commitment and work independently of teacher intervention. Teachers encourage students to reflect upon what they have learned and to use an appropriate technical vocabulary to do so, sometimes recording this in a glossary for future reference. A 'forum theatre' approach to the study of 'Macbeth' resulted in students collaborating to refine and improve their reading of the text, with a student expressing frustration that not all readers were paying as much attention to the punctuation as he was! In these lessons students are warmly appreciative of their teachers, enthusiastic about the subject, and eager to learn. However, there is a substantial proportion of teaching which is overshadowed by the perceived demands of examinations in Year 9 and Year 11. In these lessons the range of teaching methodology is overly narrow and learning is often heavily dominated by the teacher. As a result students make slower progress than they should, and do not reach their full potential, particularly in aspects of writing.
150. Teaching is unsatisfactory in just under a quarter of lessons in Years 7 to 9. Weaknesses in assessment contribute to many of the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching. Too often expectations of what students can do are inappropriately low and are sometimes based on incorrect understanding of what students have already achieved. This is reflected in marking, where the awarding of levels is not always accurate. Teachers are not always fully aware of the requirements of the national curriculum and as a result underestimate the standards that students need to achieve. Older students in particular work at levels below their potential and work in books is suggestive of a casual attitude to the subject. For the most part unsatisfactory lessons are focused on the completion of tasks rather than on the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding, and students are insufficiently

challenged. There is little explicit teaching of skills and the purposes of these lessons are not always clear, beyond the consolidation of earlier learning. Students are mildly disaffected in such lessons and show little engagement with their work.

151. The department is poorly accommodated and resourced. Although displays of work are often imaginative, for example, an entertaining and informative display on literary criticism from a Year 9 class, classrooms present a dispiriting and shabby environment in which to work and books are often battered and unappealing. A new departmental office and storage area is contributing to a sense of a fresh start for the department.
152. The department has been a casualty, over a prolonged period of time, of staffing, recruitment and retention issues. Good use is being made of the fresh perspectives that new and non-specialist teachers are making to the teaching of the subject and there is now a much more appropriate spread of expertise and experience within the department. Morale is good and teachers are realistic and reflective about their own practice. The new head of department is optimistic and resolute and provides a role model of good practice; the department is well supported by school senior managers and governors in its efforts to bring about change.

Literacy

153. Students enter the school with good standards of literacy. At age 11 most students are confident and effective speakers, able to write fluently and correctly and present work neatly. Progress in developing literacy across subjects of the curriculum is uneven and teachers have varying expectations of their students' standards of literacy. In some practical subjects, for example dance, where students are provided with a rich and expanding vocabulary to discuss and evaluate what they do, students make good progress and are keen to try out their new acquisitions of language. Where attention to developing language is less focused students encounter key vocabulary on display but teaching is not directed to the application of this vocabulary in written and oral work. Standards of presentation of work in books are not consistent across the school and as a result, by age 14, students have an insecure understanding of teachers' expectations of their reading and writing. The quality of writing in particular is markedly inconsistent from subject to subject.
154. At age 16 students have encountered a very wide range of writing and of reading across the curriculum. Some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, have extended reading built into their schemes of work and pupils enjoy the opportunities this offers to deepen their understanding of the subject. Too many students abandon a cursive handwriting style by age 16 and presentation in books is often untidy and uncorrected by the student. Approaches to spelling and to marking vary from department to department and pupils have few strategies in place to cope with the spelling of unfamiliar vocabulary. At age 16 standards of speaking and listening are at or slightly above national expectations, students are fluent and articulate, able to talk with confidence to unfamiliar adults in formal as well as informal contexts.
155. Although there are examples of good practice in promoting pupils' literacy across the whole curriculum, a co-ordinated approach is lacking. The school has correctly identified this as an area for immediate development. A cross-curricular co-ordinator has been appointed and a school policy - which is comprehensive and thorough, is ready to be presented to staff. An audit of literacy is currently being conducted and will be used to inform the spending of the school's 2001-2202 standards fund grant. The school intends to boost the attainment of Y7 pupils by the introduction of literacy progress units in September 2002.

MATHEMATICS

156. Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- The quality of mathematics teaching is good.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good.
- The support for students with special educational needs is good.
- The mathematics faculty is well managed and resources well organised by the head of faculty.

Areas for improvement

- The marking of students' work and feedback to help them succeed is inconsistent.
- The co-ordination of a whole school approach to developing students' abilities to apply basic numeracy skills in the other subjects of the curriculum is lacking.
- There are insufficient practical resources for learning mathematics.
- The potential of computers to enhance the mathematics curriculum for all students has yet to be realised.

157. Attainment in mathematics for students at age 14 is above average. Results in the national tests for 14 year-olds are above the national average and close to the average for similar schools. In these tests last year three-quarters of students achieved the standard expected and half exceeded this standard. In recent years these results have shown a steady improvement, similar to the national trend.

158. Many students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are above average and are taught in sets according to their attainment in mathematics. They generally make progress appropriate to their abilities and overall maintain good standards of work in mathematics lessons up to the end of Year 9. By this age most students have sound competence in number work and recall a good range of basic number facts, including the conversions between commonly used fractions, decimals and percentages. Many students are able to calculate with confidence, using either mental or written methods. Higher-attaining students reach good standards in algebra and use Pythagoras' Theorem and trigonometric ratios to solve problems involving triangles in two dimensions.

159. GCSE results for students aged 16 are similar to the national average. Almost all students achieve at least grade G in GCSE examinations at age 16, and last year half achieved A* to C grades. In 2000 GCSE results were slightly below the national average and improved to be slightly above average in 2001. Appropriate targets for improving the GCSE results have been set by the faculty. Students' progress in mathematics lessons between the ages of 14 and 16 is satisfactory. Most students can solve algebraic equations, use geometry and handle data, including estimating probabilities commensurate with their abilities. The highest attaining students apply the sine and cosine rules in navigation problems. There are no significant differences in the standards attained by boys and girls in either the national tests at 14 or in GCSE at 16.

160. Overall the teaching of mathematics is good. It is almost always at least satisfactory with a high proportion of good teaching, and occasionally very good or excellent teaching. It is generally better in Years 10 and 11 where a higher proportion of

specialist mathematics teachers are deployed to support the faculty's aim to further improve the GCSE results. These teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject that enables them to interest students with clear demonstrations and explanations of mathematical concepts and techniques. A feature of the good teaching is that students are often given specific targets for learning and they are made aware of how new skills and concepts are connected to what they have learned in the past. Most teachers have a very good understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and of GCSE and use this to good effect in their teaching.

161. In many lessons teachers question students very effectively when introducing new learning. However, when the extension of learning is not clearly identified they do not question effectively to check for understanding at the end of the lesson. The planning and preparation of lessons is generally good. Most teachers ensure lessons have an appropriate sequence of teaching and learning activities that maintain students' interests and a good pace to learning. But for some students the structure of mathematics lessons lacks sufficient variety. When they are expected to work independently for long periods on worksheet or textbook exercises the pace of learning is sometimes not sustained and some students are over dependent on the teacher to encourage them to sustain a satisfactory level of concentration.
162. Teachers have good relationships with their students and effective classroom management skills. The students respond well to consistently good teaching, especially those with special educational needs, who make good progress. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The most able students are usually provided with extension exercises to ensure they learn at the highest levels of attainment. However, the marking of work and provision of written feedback that will help students to improve is very inconsistent across the faculty and is a weakness.
163. The mathematics faculty is well managed by the Head of Faculty. Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and planning for development are good. Effective use is made of information from tests to set long-term target levels in the national tests and grades in GCSE examinations. There are good links with many of the contributory primary schools. Since the last inspection the standards achieved by students have improved, particularly in national tests at age 14, and the faculty has maintained the good quality of mathematics teaching. Good leadership and management have ensured that clear targets and strategies for improving the mathematics curriculum are in place. In particular, the faculty has appropriately identified the further improvement of the GCSE results as a priority. Overall good progress has been made in mathematics since the last inspection.
164. The faculty has begun to introduce many aspects of the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9 and although the overall provision of resources is satisfactory, there are insufficient practical resources for teaching and learning mathematics to support this fully. There are sufficient computer programs for mathematics but the curriculum is not effectively enriched by their use due to restricted access to computers. Recently there has been a significant number of changes to the Mathematics Faculty staff which has led to difficulties in standardising procedures, sharing good practices and the effective delegation of responsibilities by the Head of Faculty. The specialist mathematics teachers are well qualified and experienced and show a high level of commitment and enthusiasm for their subject.

Numeracy

165. Overall standards of numeracy are satisfactory. The majority of students enter the school aged 11 with a good level of numeracy skills. These skills are developed in the school mainly through the mathematics curriculum and there are very few planned opportunities for students to develop skills of using and applying their mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum. In mathematics lessons most students are confident with numbers and are able to calculate using appropriate mental and written methods. They are taught to use calculators effectively and to solve numerical problems. They mostly represent information accurately using graphs and charts and make sense of information presented in a variety of forms. When the quality of teaching in mathematics lessons is good, teachers usually give due attention to developing students' numeracy skills. Most mathematics classrooms include 'word walls' displaying mathematical words, but these are sometimes not used effectively by teachers to ensure that all students acquire the vocabulary needed.
166. In history, geography and RE there are some opportunities for students to use and interpret graphs and charts. In ICT lessons students are taught to construct formulae when using spreadsheets. In science and design technology the students use number, measuring and graphical skills. However, such opportunities for developing numeracy within the other subjects of the curriculum are limited. The mathematical skills students need to achieve high standards in these subjects are not explicitly identified in planning.
167. The school has made an appropriate start on introducing the guidance for teaching and learning mathematics and numeracy given by the National Strategy for students aged 11 to 14. The mathematics department has begun to monitor the progress made by students in Year 7 against an appropriate range of specific basic numeracy skills. An audit of numeracy has been conducted and a sound whole school policy for numeracy across the curriculum has been approved. But due to several staff changes this has not been implemented and at present lacks coordination.

SCIENCE

168. Overall, the quality of provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are generally good with students achieving well.
- The new Head of Faculty has a clear vision for improvement and has already fostered a good team spirit.
- Staff have a clear understanding of what must be done to develop the department further.
- Teachers are well qualified, dedicated and supported by an equally dedicated team of technicians.
- Long and medium term planning is well supported by published schemes.

Areas for improvement

- The good progress that students make during Key Stage 3 is not continued into Key Stage 4 where progress is satisfactory. Hence standards, although in line with national averages and with predictions from cognitive ability tests, are below those that might be expected when students' achievements at Key Stage 3 are taken into account.
- Short term planning does not take account of individual students' learning needs, particularly at the ends of the ability spectrum.
- The effectiveness of the departmental systems for monitoring and evaluating its own progress has yet to be proven.

169. In Years 7 to 9 students make good progress. Results at the end of Year 9 are better than national averages with the proportion of children reaching the highest levels of achievement (level 7 and above) being more than double the national average. The GCSE results in 2001 matched national standards and exceeded the scores predicted by the cognitive ability tests. They were, however, below the target that the school set for itself and did not reflect a continuity of the progress made in Years 7 to 9. In recent years, standards at Key Stage 4 have not matched the upward national trend.
170. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good and sometimes very good and this has helped the school to make steady progress in this key stage since the last inspection. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is most frequently satisfactory. One factor, which slows the rate of progress in Years 10 and 11, is the poor attitude a minority of students who are reluctant to work at the required pace or to the required standard. Teaching was observed to be less than satisfactory in only a small minority of lessons. In these cases there was a mismatch between the ability of the learners and the low expectation of the teachers. This led to poor challenge and pace that allowed the more disruptive students to interfere with the learning of the class.
171. In the good and very good lessons the teachers' enthusiasm and suitable choice of resources captured the enthusiasm of the students. Good demonstrations, lively expositions relating science to everyday life and well-controlled student involvement in discussions kept them engaged. For example, in one lesson students were so enthused by the exposition of the teacher that they challenged each other to complete the practical task quickly, without loss of accuracy, and whilst working safely. In another, a variation on a traditional alkali metal demonstration allowed the students to see that their prediction that hydrogen was produced was true and provided the teacher with the chance to explore flame tests and the colours that metal ions produce in a flame. A feature common to the good and very good lessons in both key stages was that teachers continually reminded students of the time allocated for tasks, thereby injecting pace into the lesson. This was put to good effect in one Year 9 lesson where the teacher used a variety of resources, including computers, to reinforce the learning of a very challenging group of students.
172. In contrast to the good practice seen is the insufficient attention that is given to the learning of students at both ends of the ability spectrum. Limited use is made of additional resources for either the very able or for those students with special educational needs. Staff do not strictly adhere to the department's marking policy and students are not always sure of their targets.
173. The Head of Faculty was new in post at the beginning of the academic year and this, together with the return to work of the Second in Faculty after a long illness, puts the department in a strong position to address the areas for development. Management of the department has some strong features. There are plans in place to make the quality assurance activities in which the department engages more effective and the department is now well placed to put policy into practice so as to bring about improvement. The department has the beginnings of a system for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Staffing problems in the recent past have meant that the effectiveness of this has not yet been evaluated fully. Relationships in the department are good. Teachers in the department are well qualified and the gender and ethnic mix provides good role models for the students. The department is well supported by a committed team of technicians. The adoption of a new syllabus for GCSE has re-energised staff and the proposal to offer the equivalent of three GCSEs in separate sciences is appropriate for the more able students. The department

recognises that the suitability of the new course for all students will need to be monitored and evaluated carefully.

174. The recently opened science extension does much to enhance the learning environment but this is diminished by the poor state of cleanliness of the science block as a whole. The age of some laboratories and the isolation of one laboratory make for a sharp contrast and these areas are in need of some upgrading.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- There is good teaching.
- Guidance given to students is good.
- There are good relationships in art lessons.
- There is a good range of learning activities.

Areas for improvement

- A few lessons lack pace because learning objectives are not sufficiently demanding.
- Opportunities to use computers are too few.

176. When they first come to the school, some Year 7 students have good drawing skills, and have experienced a good range of different kinds of artwork. Others have had limited experience of using paint, and are not confident in their approach to art activities. Because the teachers place an emphasis on developing the students' art skills, most students make quick progress, and by the end of Year 7 they have acquired sufficient skill to express their ideas effectively. For example, they make good use of line and tone in portrait drawing, and combine this with collage and mixed-media techniques to achieve more abstract effects. The good progress continues through Years 8 and 9. Students are gaining a good understanding of the work of established artists from their teachers and from the internet, and make good use of this knowledge in their own creative ideas. Year 8 students experiment with form and colour combinations to produce attractive masks inspired by a study of world cultures. Year 9 students have learned to make intelligent selections from previous compositions, and suggest several different ways of developing their work. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students are producing work which meets the standard expected nationally by students their age. Some of the more artistically talented students produce exceptional work.

177. In Years 10 and 11, the students who choose to follow the GCSE course are starting to extend their skills to experiment with different materials. For example, Year 10 students quickly learned some silk painting techniques, and were able to achieve some striking effects. In Year 11, students completed some good painting from observation to enhance their previous coursework. On the other hand, students, particularly some boys in Year 11, are not used to working at a fast rate unless their teachers push them to do so. Where there is underachievement it is often the result of insufficient quantity of work in portfolios. The most able Year 11 students undertake good research for their work, and select ideas well for development. In

conversation, they show good understanding of their work: they know their predicted grades and explain clearly what they need to do in order to improve them. Although they are still significantly below the national average, GCSE results have improved steadily except for last year, when they were affected by difficulties of marking a new syllabus. Work seen during the inspection was of a higher standard than suggested by previous performance.

178. The improved standards have been achieved as a result of good teaching and co-ordination. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory, and often better than that. Teachers give clear instructions and demonstrate skills effectively. They know their subject well, and set up learning activities which interest students, and inspire them to concentrate. They form good relationships and encourage students. Students are given a good idea of how their work is progressing and how they could improve it. There is very detailed guidance to students, particularly those preparing for examinations. In the few lessons where learning is only satisfactory, it is usually because the demands made on students have slackened, either in terms of learning objectives not being sufficiently challenging, or where the pace of work becomes too relaxed.
179. The teachers work well together, regularly reviewing the art curriculum, and comparing samples of work in their efforts to maintain high standards. This encourages a similar commitment from students. In discussion, many students say they like art. They usually concentrate well, are keen to answer questions and talk about intentions in their artwork. They behave well in art, and treat the accommodation and materials with respect.
180. The range of activities offered in art is broad and varied, but there are too few opportunities for the impromptu use of computers, though this is soon to be addressed. There is a great deal of artwork on display around the school which is treated with respect, and which makes a major contribution to the cultural ethos of the school.
181. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. There has been an improvement in standards in Years 7,8 and 9 which is likely to improve future results in Years 10 and 11. Teachers currently working in art have good knowledge and understanding, and good teamwork and co-ordination are ensuring greater consistency in teaching. There is more imaginative and problem solving work and better links outside school. Students are clear about how their work is assessed and are able to contribute their self-evaluations.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Accommodation and resources for design and technology are very good and well managed.
- High quality of presentation of students' planning and designs.
- Teaching and technical staff work well together.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement of boys
- The further development of more systematic evaluation of the work of the faculty

183. Standards at the end of Year 9 are at the level expected nationally with girls achieving better than boys. In recent years boys have achieved at least the national average standard by the end of Year 9, with girls consistently achieving better than the national average. Students use well a variety of sources to support designing, and test their ideas through models and drawings. They present final plans well, often using computer aided design packages. Making is undertaken with care and
- artefacts are finished well. Students reflect and evaluate their work well and to explain their thinking and record it clearly using prose. Students with learning difficulties achieve well and able students produce two dimensional and three dimensional work of a good standard. Girls achieve significantly better than boys.
184. Standards in Year 11 are above national expectations. By the end of Year 11, students are well above the national average in food, textiles and resistant materials. In graphics, students achievement matches national averages. Students use a variety of media in their planning and design with considerable skill, leading to impressive finished pieces. Students design portfolios are very good because students are taught well and are well motivated to work to a very high standard. In food technology standards are very high because of very good teaching. Students use equipment and machinery with confidence and skill. The great majority adopt a mature approach to working in the faculty and produce good work.
185. Standards in Year 11 are above national expectations. Students enjoy the subject and are well motivated to work. They benefit from very good individual support from teachers and technical staff with their practical coursework. Learning is accelerated by very good planning on the part of the teacher and by a universal expectation that every student would, as a result of using their time well, achieve very well by the end of the lesson. Where teachers set a brisk pace throughout the lesson, this brings about effective learning, good progress, and high standards.
186. Standards are also enhanced through the effective use of voluntary after school additional practical sessions in all areas of the faculty. In these smaller group situations, students benefit from greater individual support from their teachers which enhances their learning, progress, and the standard achieved.
187. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The positive start to some of the lessons secures good attitudes and behaviour from students which are sustained throughout the lesson and which lead to good progress. The less successful teaching results from ill-timed or ill-structured lessons. For example, the inappropriate timing of a demonstration by a teacher interrupted a practical session and, as a result, students lost concentration and their progress was impaired.
188. Overall, in Years 10 and 11, teaching is satisfactory; some is good or very good. In the very good lessons, the teachers have high expectations which result in purposeful and productive learning. These lessons are also characterised by very good planning by teachers, and the careful monitoring of time as the lesson progresses. Students respond well to this structure and use the available time very well.
189. Students' attitudes to their work in design and technology are generally very positive because of the good working relationships with their teachers and their enjoyment of the work. For example, a very mature attitude was shown by Year 11 students who went to another room to use computer facilities and returned with appropriate project support material. On the other hand graffiti on bench tops in some rooms, suggests

that attitudes are not always positive.

190. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been good and the faculty is well placed to improve further. Since the last inspection, the faculty has been refurbished. There is now excellent accommodation and well-equipped working areas including two computer rooms. The number of computers available to the faculty has increased dramatically and their use is now built into schemes of work and teachers' planning. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. A better balance is now struck between time spent on designing and time spent on making. A modified assessment policy has been introduced recently and is developing well.
191. The acting head of faculty is capable, committed, and rightly focused upon raising standards. Resources are well managed. Teaching and technical staff work well together. Across the faculty, health and safety practice is good except when too large a number of students use the heat treatment area.

HUMANITIES

192. All 11 to 14 year old students study National Curriculum history and geography and RE following the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus. At ages 14 to 16 all students follow a common, single subject GCSE humanities course. This course combines the study of history, geography and RE. Attainment at A*-C grades in GCSE humanities has been well above national averages for the past two years and is above national averages for all grades. The proportion of girls achieving the higher grades is higher than that of boys though boys' attainment is above the national average and the difference between girls and boys is less marked than that nationally. Boys do well in humanities when compared with their other subjects in the school.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Well-devised schemes of work.
- Enthusiastic teaching and well-planned lessons.
- For the most part effective classroom management which allows students to make good progress.
- Student attitudes are good and lead to high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of more opportunities for fieldwork.
- To make greater use of ICT to support learning.
- To make greater use of learning materials designed for students of differing abilities.
- Development of more systematic departmental evaluation.
- The provision of accommodation is unsatisfactory and resources are dated.

194. At the end of Year 9 standards are good in relation to national averages. In 2001 76 percent of students achieved the expected national level, based on teachers' assessments. A high proportion of the year group is entered each year for GCSE in Humanities and results are good when compared both with other subjects in the school and with national figures. Overall there is good value being added with students achieving better results in humanities than predictions based on prior attainment. Students' work looked at during the inspection matches the good standards achieved in the examination results.

195. In Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 teaching is for the most part good. In the majority of lessons teachers have good class control and a productive working atmosphere is established in most classes. Students quickly settle down to work. Effective questioning enables students to make good contributions to lessons and students of all abilities feel able to offer suggestions and ideas because of the encouraging responses from the teachers. Well-devised activities provide many opportunities for students to be involved in their own learning. There are some particularly good decision-making exercises, for example, where to site a new supermarket in Manchester or a new hotel in an Alpine ski resort, considering a proposal to chop down an area of tropical forest in the Amazon and observing plans to build new housing in Wollaston. These activities promote the development of geographical skills in mapwork, the drawing of graphs and diagrams and data interpretation. Teachers regularly check students' understanding of terminology and tasks set and constantly move around the class to evaluate the progress being made. In the best lessons materials designed to match students' special educational needs enabled them to make better than average progress but not all staff provide such support. Marking is for the most part conscientious, but suggestions are not routinely made about how students could improve the standard of their work.
196. Students' attitudes towards the subject are good and in nearly all lessons they are attentive and engaged with the tasks for most of the time. They are well behaved, willing to answer questions and offer ideas or suggestions and work co-operatively in pairs or groups when requested. These positive attitudes are also evident in the high standard of presentation of work in their books. Notes are neatly written, diagrams and graphs are well drawn, and maps carefully labelled and shaded. Some very good coursework by Year 11 students on the issue of housing in the United Kingdom was seen. One impressive exercise was the use of a dispersion diagram to work out categories for a choropleth map, which aimed to show the housing need over the next 20 years. Students explained the reasons for an increased demand for housing and some of the problems of using greenfield and brownfield sites. In other years good understanding of issues was shown in exercise books: for example in Year 10 students had produced well written accounts of the damage caused by tourists at Studland in Dorset; Year 9 students discussed the problems for high street shops caused by out-of-town shopping centres; and Year 8 students accurately described the problems of deforestation in tropical forests. Students show good recall of information from previous lessons and use technical terminology such as 'infiltration' and 'overland flow' accurately. They particularly enjoy decision-making exercises which allow them to participate actively in lessons and they explain clearly the reasons why they make certain choices.
197. At the time of the last inspection it was found that students were not actively involved in lessons and that higher-attaining students were not being stretched because lessons were pitched at the middle of the ability range. Both these criticisms have been resolved by the regular opportunities provided in lessons for students to be involved in their own learning. The last report also said that the schemes of work did not fully match national curriculum requirements. This has been addressed. Plans are now devised well with a wide range of interesting activities to involve students in their own learning. Each unit of work in Years 7 to 9, for example, sets out key questions, possible activities, resources, homework and ideas for differentiation and extension. However, timetabling arrangements in Years 7, 8 and 9 impact on the ability of teachers to cover fully the syllabus. The use of ICT in geography, noted as insufficient in the last inspection report, has not been addressed. Although schemes of work give references to relevant websites there is no systematic programme for the use of ICT built into lessons.
198. Accommodation for geography and humanities is unsatisfactory. Most staff do not have their own teaching room. Classroom display suffers as a result and teachers

have constantly to move teaching resources and equipment. Some of these resources are outdated and do not meet course requirements.

HISTORY

199. Provision in history is good overall.

Strengths

- The teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers provide positive role models for students and set high expectations of work and behaviour.
- The curriculum for 11 to 14 year-olds is broad and balanced and a variety of learning activities are planned which interest and motivate students, enabling them to make good progress and enjoy their lessons.
- History lessons often provide a good contribution to students' personal development.
- Teachers are well qualified and work effectively together for the benefit of students.
- Standards are enhanced by students responding well to their teachers. They usually work hard, concentrate in lessons and behave well. Lessons are characterised by good relationships and mutual respect.

Areas for development

- There are few strategies in place for developing the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the context of learning of history.
- The assessment issues raised in the last inspection report have not yet been fully addressed. Target setting for improvement is not well developed. Pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 are unclear about how they are achieving against the national curriculum levels of attainment and students in both age groups are not given sufficient feedback on what to do to improve their work.
- Planning for lessons does not always ensure that work is well matched to the abilities of students to enable them to do the best they can.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are not being rigorously implemented.

200. By the age of 14 standards of attainment in history are well above those expected for their age nationally as measured by statutory teacher assessment. Attainment in the work seen is also above national expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the work seen although in past years the teachers' assessments show that at the end of Year 9 girls achieve more highly than boys though boys do well when compared to national averages. In the work seen there are indications that a greater number of boys than girls struggle with literacy skills in this age group.

201. Amongst the 11 to 14 age group students achieve well. The majority, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The highest attaining students need more regular extension work to ensure that they reach the highest levels of which they are capable. Students are gaining a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of history through their study of National Curriculum units of work and a

variety of carefully planned and interesting learning activities. For example, in a lesson about society in the seventeenth century where they explored through a class role play the superstitions and prejudices of the time. This lesson enabled students to draw successfully on prior learning about various aspects of sixteenth and seventeenth century society in sharing views confidently with their peers. In this way many reached a deeper understanding of the issues current at the time. Much of the work is underpinned by a range of activities which help students gain an understanding of the nature of evidence and its uses and limitations. By the age of 14 many students have become confident young historians and are beginning to analyse evidence critically.

202. Students progress and achieve well within the history modules of the GCSE humanities course. Attainment in the work seen matches national expectations. Knowledge and understanding is good. For example, in a lesson which continued work on the Cuban missile crisis, many students demonstrated an emerging understanding of the complexity of the situation and the influence of communism in the post war world. This ability of a majority of students to demonstrate understanding of complex situations was also shown in completed coursework on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This work demanded some analysis and synthesis of a range of evidence which many students achieved with mature consideration of the problems encountered by both sides.
203. Literacy levels are satisfactory though for both age groups there is no planned approach to helping students develop their literacy skills and there is sometimes insufficient emphasis placed on presentation and handwriting. Opportunities for students to develop numeracy and ICT skills within history lessons are limited.
204. Teaching is consistently good with many strengths. This good teaching enables the majority of students to learn well, make good progress and to succeed. All teachers approach lessons enthusiastically and have secure subject knowledge which is used to good effect in lessons to interest and engage the students. They have high expectations of work and behaviour and students respond accordingly. Students generally work hard, concentrate well, enjoy their history lessons and expect to be successful. Teachers manage the classes very well and behaviour is usually good. Lessons are well prepared with good pace and a variety of carefully planned learning activities, many of which offer an appropriate degree of challenge. Some teachers are particularly skilled at questioning and where this methodology is used well, students of all abilities reflect on and deepen their knowledge and understanding. There is a good rapport between teachers and students with mutual respect in evidence in lessons but they are significant.
205. Teaching has few shortcomings but they are significant. In many lessons teachers do not share learning objectives with students with a consequence that students are sometimes unclear about what they are expected to learn. Though there is some very good practice in planning work to match the abilities of students, not all teachers address this sufficiently. In some classes the higher attainers are not being sufficiently stretched, and occasionally the written work set for lower attainers is not suitable. Very little feedback is given to students on what to do to improve their work through marking.
206. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The faculty handbook sets out clear guidance on a range of important issues and the programmes of work for history provide good support for teachers in planning for lessons. Though there is a system for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department this is not currently being

rigorously followed. The department has access to a range of performance data on students but target setting for improvement is not yet well developed. Though boys do well by national standards there are no agreed strategies in place to deal with their relative under-achievement in relation to girls. Regular faculty and subject meetings are held and there is a strong element of team work within the history department. New assessment strategies are being introduced for 11 to 14 year-olds to ensure that they are given clearer information about their current levels of attainment and how to improve on these but these are not yet securely embedded in practice.

207. The national curriculum for 11 to 14 year-olds is in place but the recently introduced timetabling arrangements for classes in Years 7, 8 and 9 has implications for curriculum planning and students' access and entitlement to the national curriculum is restricted. The GCSE humanities course provides a valuable and broad based curriculum. History lessons make a good contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.
208. Funding for resources has decreased over recent years and resources are currently barely adequate. As at the time of the last inspection there is still too much reliance on worksheets, though these are often of good quality and the department is working hard to address this issue. There are deficiencies in the accommodation for the humanities faculty as a whole. There are not enough classrooms to accommodate the number of teachers and teachers frequently have to move around the school and teach in different rooms. Some of the classrooms within the faculty are too small to accommodate the numbers of students comfortably.
209. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall. Standards have been maintained and teaching has improved significantly. Many of the areas for development outlined in the last inspection report have been attended to but the assessment of students' work and progress has yet to be addressed fully.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

210. Overall, the quality of provision for RE in Years 7 to 9 and the RE modules in GCSE Humanities is good. However, the school does not fully comply with statutory requirements or those of the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths

- Teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is mainly good or very good.
- Standards are raised by students' attitude which is mainly good and teacher and student relationships that are good. Relationships between students are often good.
- Student progress, learning and standards achieved, particularly for students with special educational needs, are mainly good.
- Standards at fourteen years of age are above average. Higher standards are achieved in GCSE humanities than are the case nationally.
- RE lessons contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
- Overall there has been improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The variation in the levels of work for students of differing ability identified in the schemes of work are not used in the teachers daily planning and delivery of lessons.
- The school is not compliant with statutory requirements and those of the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality and quantity of resource materials and accommodation require improvement.
- The national strategies for literacy and numeracy should be embraced and wider use made of ICT.

➤ Improve consistence in the quality of marking so that students know how well they have done and what they need to improve

211. Standards of work in RE seen during the inspection show that by the time the students are fourteen years of age they are achieving more highly than generally expected in the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus. The standards in the humanities GCSE are higher than those achieved nationally. The good standards of work are achieved because the teaching is mainly good or very good. Although the school covers well the GCSE syllabus in relation to learning about religions, it does not provide sufficient time fully to cover learning from religions and response to questions of meaning and value. This means that not all the Agreed Syllabus requirements are met and so overall standards at age 16 are below the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus.
212. Standards in RE have shown good overall improvement since the last inspection. Learning and progress is good for those students with special education needs and for the majority of students, but gifted and talented students are underachieving. Although many oral and written tasks are open-ended, teachers are not sufficiently challenging gifted and talented students to ensure they take opportunities to develop their potential fully. The department has recently started to revise their schemes of work to ensure work of different levels and extension activities are provided. These now need to be adopted and used within individual lessons more consistently by all teachers.
213. Students in Years 7 to 9 are developing a good knowledge of the main features and teachings of Christianity and of the other principal faiths. All students display at least sound knowledge of the life of Muhammad and whereas the more able describe well key beliefs and start to add meaning and make comparisons with other religions. Other groups are discussing the beliefs of Jesus. The majority of the class gain sound knowledge of these beliefs and higher ability students set these beliefs into a wider context and show a greater understanding by expressing their own views and opinions on the issues being discussed. By the end of Year 9 students have a general understanding of the similarities and differences between Christianity and the other main world religions. For example, in Year 7, students are developing a good understanding of Islam.
214. By Year 9 students as a result of learning about religion are developing an understanding of who we are and a sense of right and wrong. For example, in a series of lessons on the 'Holocaust' they use source materials well and their background knowledge well to discuss issues of right and wrong in relation to prejudice, and to empathise with the plight of the Jews. This they do in a mature and sensitive way. They relate real life examples to make informed responses and develop an awareness of the impact of prejudice. This is well supported by the teacher's sensitive but powerful use of contemporary poems. The students respond positively to this stimulus and it greatly adds to their level of debate and the thinking at higher levels.
215. Students in Years 10 and 11 during 2000 and 2002 have been covering GCSE modules on Christianity and Buddhism and from 2001 to 2003 on Christianity and Islam. Within this work they have been able to build further on the good knowledge and understanding gained by the end of Year 9. Higher ability students are confident in the use of technical vocabulary, explaining the significance of Christian ceremonies and setting them into their own cultural context and lower attaining students are able to identify and explain some of the key features of ceremonies using some technical language. In addition students are developing an understanding of religious issues through the study of the Arab and Israeli conflict. Higher ability students make the

connections between the religious and historical background to the conflict, and display an understanding of the religious issues.

216. Scrutiny of students' work and the observation of lessons show that from the age of eleven to sixteen the standard of their work progresses well. Students are motivated to learn and their motivation is kept at a high level by good quality teaching. The overwhelming majority of students listen to different views and respect the right of others to have beliefs and customs that differ from their own. Overall students behave well, are interested in the topics and enjoy the range of activities. Relationships between teachers and students are good and are often also good between the students. Because of the good experience students receive in their RE lessons, the subject makes a positive contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
217. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection was never less than satisfactory and was mainly good or better. In the very good and good lessons, the teachers are enthusiastic, plan their lessons well and ensure that each lesson has clear objectives. These lessons stimulate students as they are well sequenced and contain a rich variety of well-paced activities. In those lessons that are satisfactory the variety of activity and pace of the lesson does not sufficiently stretch the higher ability students, and in particular the gifted and talented students. The purpose of each lesson is shared with the students and at the end the teacher summarises their success in meeting the purpose of the individual lesson. Students as a result are clear about the requirements of the individual lesson and most link this with what they have learnt recently. At times the strategies used by the teacher for summarising are imaginative and provide excellent endings for lessons. For example, the ending to a Year 9 lesson on the Holocaust via a variation on a class quiz and the 'hot seating' of a student at the end of a Year 10 lesson on Christianity to add variety to the traditional closing question and answer session. However, not all students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are clear about the purpose of the lesson in terms of where the work is leading as part of a sequence of activities and as a result are not fully aware of why they are undertaking the work.
218. There are examples of effective marking . However, across the department there is an inconsistency in the quality of marking, which does not always indicate to students how well they have done and what they need to improve. Teachers do not systematically follow-up the outcomes of marking to ensure that students complete fully any missed, or incomplete work, and corrections.
219. Improvement since the last inspection has been good but statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 are not fully met. Attainment has improved in Years 9 and 11 and the quality of teaching is often good or very good. Although the department does not have a permanent co-ordinator and is staffed by many non-specialists the enthusiasm and teamwork generated compensates for this. However, in order that progress is maintained the department will need to address the issue of further professional development opportunities for all teachers of RE. In particular, there is a need to ensure that the department is equipped to address fully the requirements of the national strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and that wider use is made of ICT. The quality and quantity of resource materials and accommodation available to the department is poor.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

220. Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is improving, however, the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has insufficient breadth and depth and the school is not fulfilling statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths

- Teaching in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of the examination assessment criteria to inform lesson planning.
- Leadership: a lot has been achieved quickly.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has insufficient breadth and depth.
- The school is not fulfilling statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11.
- There is limited planning for students with special educational needs.

221. Attainment at GCSE in 2001 was below the national average. The achievement of girls was higher than that of boys. Attainment in work seen is broadly average. Data provided by the school shows that there is some underachievement by boys in Year 11.
222. Attainment was average in Years 7 to 9 in 2001. Lesson observations indicate that attainment is broadly in line with that expected for the age range with regard to communicating information, but students' knowledge and understanding lacks depth and breadth. Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is below average. Attempts to catch up are hampered by a curriculum which is in transition. Students follow a good national curriculum programme in Year 7. In Year 8 the programme of work includes CLAIT (a vocationally oriented course which focuses on individual pieces of software). This is generally unsuitable and encourages repetition of some skills and narrows the range of information communication technology work. CLAIT is being phased out. In Year 9, students begin a GNVQ programme. While this has paid dividends by securing the equivalent of two GCSEs grade C for over half the entry in Year 10 (2001), the programme affects adversely the Years 7 to 9 curriculum.
223. Progress of students in lessons is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Progress is satisfactory or better in Years 10 and 11, where reference to assessment criteria by teachers is good. Generally, the boys and girls make similar progress in lessons, but the girls in Year 9 work faster and to better effect than the boys. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall because they are well motivated and the work focuses on the acquisition of procedural skills. The impact of this is most notable for some students with statements.
224. Year 11 students produced a computerised system for a real client in the wider community. Most students develop systems which require a range of stationery to be produced (for example, letterheads, flyers and business cards). Higher-attainers do this well. They include a wide range of services and use a wide range of commercial software, including Word, Publisher and PhotoDraw. They also include some data processing; for example, point-of-sale data capture using the spreadsheet *Excel*. The database, 'Access', is used by some students for mail merging. Students explain their system and the processes that they went through very well. They document the system and understand the need for detail, precision and good illustrations. Middle ability students do similar work to the higher-attainers, but their work is characterised by fewer services, the use of a narrower software set and less well developed documentation. Lower-attainers are not confident when discussing their work.

225. In Year 9, students combine text with clip art in order to produce a template document for an imaginary client. Students are learning to take pictures with a digital camera. They integrate these into their products. Overall, the students' procedural ICT skills are consistent with expectations at the end of Year 9. The emphasis on refining their products for use with an audience brings the work broadly similar to that expected nationally. The great majority of students can integrate text with pictures. However, many students are unable to explain what a template is and why one might be used. Overall, girls tend to produce better designs, more quickly and they are much more able to suggest possible improvements to examples produced by teachers. There is generally little distinction between the skills of higher, middle and lower-attaining students. Year 8 students perform competently searches on the internet. They select search engines and are familiar with Internet address name suffixes, like co.uk, or org.uk. The majority of students demonstrate a similar level of skill. Students with special educational needs, with the exception of some stated students, access the Internet independently and effectively. Students in Year 8 perform simple calculations on a spreadsheet. They do not use these skills for significant modelling.
226. In design and technology higher-attainers in Year 7 have an understanding and knowledge of control which is consistent with expectation for age in Year 6. They translate a simple specification for a control activity (switching on lights or a motor, for example) into a command language. They understand how procedures work. Middle attaining students translate simple instructions into commands (i.e. given a sequence and what the programme needs to do, they can apply the appropriate commands). ICT knowledge and skills are developed well in design and technology, using good learning resources. However students do not have scope for consolidating knowledge or securing levels of attainment appropriate for age in Year 9.
227. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. The features which make it good in Years 10 and 11 are the methodology and reference to assessment requirements, which are shared with students to good effect. Teachers make clear what is required to achieve success. Students are given the opportunity to develop systems for real clients from commerce and industry; this gives the work good purpose. Students are encouraged systematically to review reach other's work. There is a good emphasis on assessment criteria and on providing students with models of good work, which serve as a focus for good, extended discussion between students and the teacher.
228. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory or better in Years 10 and 11. What sometimes makes learning only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 is a delay by some teachers in responding to feedback from students. Part of the problem for a non-specialist teachers is that they use materials which they have not produced and they do not all have the knowledge to make modifications to these materials. Teachers identify learning objectives, but they do not always use the key learning objective to focus their work with individuals and the class and sometimes the teaching methodology is inappropriate.
229. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Students are interested in the work and for the most part remain on task for extended periods. In Years 10 and 11 a few students are inclined to relax their concentration when not directly engaged by the teacher. No instances of poor or inappropriate behaviour were observed.
230. The school has made at least satisfactory progress on the majority of issues raised in the previous inspection, especially improving leadership. Attainment still needs to be

raised in Years 7 to 9 across the full range of the National Curriculum requirements. Although attainment in Years 10 and 11 has improved considerably, it has not done so for all students as not everyone has access to a coherent ICT experience within the requirements of the Years 10 and 11 National Curriculum.

231. The department's capacity to improve is good. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting an ICT co-ordinator. A full-time co-ordinator has been in post since September 2000. Since then, a comprehensive curriculum has been put in place in Years 7 to 9 and there are sound accredited courses in Years 10 and 11. Good departmental support documentation, policies and a secure development plan have been put in place. The quality of teaching is monitored. Weaknesses in curriculum development derive partly from the need to deploy a large number of non-specialists and to implement a substantial programme to a very short timescale. The curriculum weaknesses are recognised by the school and there are plans to move to a more secure position.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students attain average standards at GCSE and achieve well in speaking. Their attitude is good and they behave well.
- Teaching is consistently good and often very good in both languages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Students learn well as a result.
- Teachers ensure that standards of speaking are above average by Year 9.
- Teachers plan a range of stimulating activities which require students to speak the language.
- The faculty is led well.
- Action taken since the last inspection has resulted in very good improvement in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards of writing across the curriculum depress overall standards in both languages.
- Students are not challenged enough to work from memory and to speak only the foreign language in class. In particular, more can be expected of the higher attaining students.

French and German

233. In Years 7 to 9 most students learn French, and a quarter German, as their first modern language. Over the past few years, standards in the teacher assessments in Year 9 have been at levels expected nationally. Samples of these students' subsequent work in Years 10 and 11 indicate that assessments were accurate.
234. The school enters nearly all students for a modern language at GCSE, more than in similar schools. The overall A* to C success rate is average, slightly lower in 2001 than in 2000, but the distinct trend over five years is upward and significantly above national improvements, having risen in French from 9 per cent in 1997 to 46 per cent in 2001. French and German are among of the strongest subjects in the school, and, in relation to their overall attainment on their entry to the school, students achieve as expected. Girls' standards are higher than boys but, most recently, the gap between them was less than that nationally. In 2000 and 2001, almost all students attained at least grade G, better than in similar schools.

235. Currently in Year 9 overall standards are in line with those expected for the students' age, but there is variation between skills. Speaking is relatively strong. Most students speak willingly, pronounce correctly and enjoy practising in role-play. Because work habits are generally good, and patterns of language are practised thoroughly in class, students remember vocabulary and phrases when they hear or read these in new contexts, and so understand details on tape and in text. The more gifted make deductions, although many in even the top sets are unsure when they hear familiar questions phrased in an unfamiliar way.
236. Standards of writing, however, are not as they should be, even though most students are on course to achieve the expected national curriculum level by the end of the year. The highest attaining students write accurately at length with minimal support. In German, for example, they express reasons for their likes and dislikes and place the verb correctly, and in French they use in both present and past tenses accurately. But these few exceptional students apart, paragraphs on family, friends and favourite rooms do not show enough attention to correct verb endings and agreements. Although patterns are practised repeatedly, only a few students apply rules accurately when they are tested from memory. Students with special educational needs make good progress. They learn to pronounce clearly and recognise learnt vocabulary and phrases. Some write simple paragraphs using the past tense accurately.
237. The picture is similar in Year 11. Overall standards are average. Most students, as in recent years, are at grades C or D which reflects the school's own predictions. Coursework helps redress some of the weaknesses in literacy; because students are conscientious they learn vocabulary and phrase and try to apply these correctly, for example in film reviews and essays about friends and holidays. The more gifted use a full range of tenses, and write extensively, accurately adapting model essays and letters, linking ideas and adding reasons and opinions with some flair. Some lower attaining students include past tenses and negatives in their coursework pieces. Attainment is average overall because students are willing to speak and learn their set phrases in answer to rehearsed questions. In relation to other skills, however, speaking is less well developed than in Year 9. Where students speak with any accuracy and confidence it is usually based on what they have written down. Pronunciation is poor, affected by reading the text, and too little extended language is memorised.
238. In relation to their prior attainment on entry to the school, students' overall achievement is satisfactory by Years 9 and 11. The highest-attainers do not speak spontaneously but compensate to a degree in the richness and accuracy of their writing. Despite the lack of ambition and invention in writing, especially in Year 11, the average student writes and speaks accurately enough to reach predicted GCSE levels. Students with special educational needs are usually suitably supported and achieve well, especially in Years 7 to 9; in Years 8 and 9 in small sets in French, and, more noticeably, in larger, mixed-ability classes in German in Years 7 to 9. Some in Years 10 and 11 achieve above their expected level in their use of tense and other structures. In Year 11 boys volunteer more readily than girls for oral work, and girls organise their notes more tidily and so have a more secure base for revision, but the difference between their respective standards is not significant.
239. Teaching is consistently good in both languages. In three-quarters of the lessons observed it was good or better, and in over two out of five it was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching or significant weaknesses. The faculty's practice is inclusive: students in all classes receive worthwhile learning experiences and most enjoy them. Teachers have both the confidence to allow students to practise speaking between themselves and the skill to manage the activity well. They ensure that all students have opportunities to participate, tailor questions and tasks to their level of understanding, and support individual students well in their marking and

assessment. Lessons have pace and high expectations, and good organisation and timed tasks ensure that time is maximised.

240. As a result, students are interested, work purposefully and learn well. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson conducted entirely in excellent French, students made very good progress for their age in saying the time and using adjectives in sentences to describe members of staff. In a very good German lesson in Year 8, the teacher's planning for different needs was excellent: lower-attaining students were helped to classify and describe items of food with colour-coded text, and the more gifted were expected to repeat groups of food from memory, which most managed well. Achievement was very good too, in a Year 9 French class where over half the students have special needs. Here, there was a real buzz of enjoyment and a feeling of pride as a non-stop series of activities, conducted totally in spoken French and including labelling a figure, song and mime games, enabled students to use the language throughout. In the dual linguists' beginners' German class in Year 10, students found out information on cinema programmes and times in an authentic German website. They then, in only their second term, took part in a ten-part dialogue arranging to meet someone on a date at the cinema, confidently using phrases not in the script and improvising asides.
241. In the satisfactory teaching which can be improved, teachers do not insist that students, especially in top sets, communicate only in the foreign language, and the higher-attainers are not challenged enough in homework tasks, in which much more memorisation can be expected.
242. The faculty deserves much credit for its very significant progress since the last inspection. Overall standards have improved because teaching and students' attitudes are much better. Teachers are able linguists; teaching and learning through the foreign language is now the accepted norm, and students respond well. Students with special needs now make more progress. Consistently good practice and unity of purpose augur well for sustained improvement. The curriculum is well planned, teaching is now monitored more effectively, assessment is more regular and standardised, and marking more helpful. The long-established German exchange is still flourishing. French and German assistants are used very well for small group work and contribute to the above average standards of speaking.
243. The new head of faculty shows good leadership qualities and is maintaining the progress made under his predecessor. The most pressing issues have been clearly identified: more extended, interesting and accurate writing at all levels; using assessment to plan more specifically for the needs of individual students especially the average and higher-attainers; improved planning and use of information communication technology; the rebuilding of links with France. In the longer term, the school needs to consider how best to make the second language accessible to more students, preferably during Years 7 to 9.

MUSIC

244. Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- The leadership of the department.
- The combined musical strengths and experiences of the teaching staff.
- The opportunities for music making, both in the curriculum and in addition to the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of achievement in Years 7 to 9.

- Provision and use of ICT to support effectively teaching and learning.
- More significantly upon school individual programmes to support students with special educational needs.

245. Since the last inspection, the standards demonstrated by students in Year 7 have fallen dramatically. Here students are working at a level which is well below the national expectations for achievement in music. The low level of musical skill means that compositions are often unimaginative and not very musical. Students do not understand how to combine the sounds of different types of instruments and how to use different levels of volume and different speeds to improve their musical ideas. Some struggle to keep a steady beat and find it hard to play instruments with control, e.g. playing a drum quietly, loudly and quietly again. Reading and performing very easy music symbols is also too hard for some students. There is a tendency to let the students use keyboards when classroom percussion and acoustic instruments are more appropriate and because of the lack of rooms equipped for music making, the noise level is often too loud to hear properly. The poor condition of the headphones adds to the noise level and in these lessons students are unable to make very good progress.
246. The quality of singing in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but not as good as in the previous inspection. In class students sing quietly but tunefully and have a repertoire of simple call and response songs and 3 part rounds. Some of the students taking instrumental lessons have started to use their instruments in class and their work is good.
247. By the end of Year 9, about half of the students are reaching a level which reflects national expectations but there is a very wide spread of ability throughout the year. The most able students are able to rehearse and play a keyboard melody using four different chords and can compose an extract of music to accompany a Shakespeare play. The compositions have a clear structure and make effective use of different chords and the voice. Students understand more sophisticated application of some composing techniques such as drones, the pentatonic and ostinato. Good teaching has meant that these students are making good progress. However, standards overall are too varied and standards of achievement in Years 7 to 9 is an area for development.
248. Since 2000 the number of GCSE students taking music is increasing and since the last inspection the standards at GCSE A* - C passes have improved and were above the national average for A* - C passes and A* - G passes in 2001. In the sixth form AS levels are good. In all years, standards suffer from the lack of ICT to support teaching and learning, an issue not addressed since the last inspection.
249. Overall the quality of music teaching is good throughout the school. All the lessons are very well planned and the students are very well managed. The department promotes high standards of behaviour. In Years 7 to 9 music is taught through projects. Each project involves a good variety of music including the popular and the classical and a balance of composing, listening to and performing music using activities that are designed to meet the needs of the broad range of musical abilities in the class. However, the department does not draw significantly upon the school's individual programmes to support those with special needs. Everyone is able to use resource cards that give ideas and reminders about what they are learning and through the use of good questioning techniques the students learn how to talk about their work and how to improve it.
250. In Years 10 and 11 lessons also use a wide range of world music, classical music, popular, jazz and aleotric music. Students have opportunity to practice past exam

questions but sometimes not enough time is given for students to go through the correct answers and identify mistakes or make corrections.

251. Students enjoy the music lessons, especially performing their work and listening to other people's work. In Years 7 to 9, however, there are some small groups of students who try to disrupt lessons and who are not encouraging of the achievements of others. The teachers control these outbursts by a minority very well.
252. In addition to the music curriculum 100 students have instrumental lessons subsidised by the school and the department provides a full timetable of bands and choirs. Since the last inspection the extra-curricular programme involves both older and younger students. Everyone involved understands the self-discipline required and responsibilities of playing in a band or singing in a choir. Attendance at instrumental lessons and rehearsals is very good, everyone is on time and everyone enjoys the experience. Sixth form students conduct some junior ensembles and assist in lessons as part of their work enrichment programme.
253. The department uses Northamptonshire Music Service teaching staff whose teaching and involvement in the department shows that they provide value for money. The instrumental teaching is good and the instrumental teachers help the department in training its ensembles.
254. Students receive a good quality music education and achieve good standards in GCSE. The music department provides vibrant and engaging musical experiences both in and out of the curriculum. These are enjoyed by students in all years.
255. The new head of department provides clear vision and direction for the development and improvement of music education. There is a clear departmental plan that includes whole school areas of development, and also identifies specific targets for the department in raising standards of achievement. The recent appointment of a second music teacher has not only given the department much needed stability but also created an ideal combination of musical strengths and experiences in the teaching staff. This is an important factor for the continued improvement of the work of the department.
256. The department is looking forward to moving into a new dedicated and purpose-built arts block that is soon to be built.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Standards at GCSE are above average and have been for the last three years.
- Good leadership and management.
- Very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Poor accommodation and a poor learning environment.

258. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average at grades A* to C compared with all schools, and the percentage achieving A*/A grades was also above average. Girls have been consistently performing better than boys at A* to C, although the boys

results are still above those achieved nationally. Results have been above the national average for the last three years, however as the national results are rising the school results are falling. The department are aware of this and are putting into place systems to monitor more closely progress at GCSE and raise standards.

259. Students attainment in physical education overall is above the standard expected by the end of Year 9. In a Year 7 skills lesson a mixed ability group of boys evaluated their approach to keeping possession and in a Year 8 girls football lesson the majority of girls developed the skills of shooting and showed clear improvement in technique during the lesson. Dance is a strength and students in Year 7 demonstrated an above average attainment in improvisation whilst working on an African dance theme. However further improvement may be restricted as they are only taught every two weeks. Year 9 students in both basketball and volleyball need further skills development if the majority of the students are to reach and exceed national standards by the end of Year 9.
260. In Years 10 and 11 students' attainment overall matches that expected nationally, although students following the GCSE examination course are attaining higher standards than students undertaking the core physical education lessons. In a Year 10 basketball lesson students were taught to pass and dribble effectively and to undertake a game of attack against defence in which the students were encouraged to coach and act as officials. Students in a Year 10 dance group effectively and skilfully improvised visualisation to music, and evaluated each other's performance in a very mature manner. In a Year 11 lesson, the students took part in three activities, trampolining, table tennis and badminton, and in each the overall standard of attainment was satisfactory, and when the students had specific coaching, was good.
261. The quality of teaching in physical education is good and occasionally very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use this to plan lessons with good pace and challenge. Participation levels are high. However in a minority of lessons, strategies to involve non-participants in learning are underdeveloped. Teachers relate well to students, giving them confidence to respond to questioning and to perform in front of other students. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 7 dance lesson. Clear explanations and demonstrations ensure that students have a sound understanding of the lesson objectives. Positive relationships have been developed based on respect, and on the use of praise for both effort and positive responses and good examples of this were seen in a Year 8 girls' football lesson and a Year 10 GCSE basketball lesson. Teachers, however, do not give enough opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning, to evaluate critically others' performance and to assess their progress against expected outcomes.
262. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Students are well behaved, motivated and interested and the majority are willing to practise and to persevere. Standards are high, correct kit is demanded, good behaviour expected and most students respect the rules of the department. Students, including those with special needs who are integrated into lessons, make satisfactory progress, work well together in pairs and groups, and show good levels of concentration even when not directly supervised by the teacher.
263. Subject leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the department, and members of the department work closely together and are very supportive of each other. This makes a significant and positive contribution to the good teaching. Good practice is not sufficiently highlighted and used as a model for improving standards further. Not all staff remind students at

regular intervals of their expectations, and the high standards that they demand. Subject documentation is satisfactory. However, the department are currently revising schemes of work to meet the requirements of the 2000 curriculum.

264. Neither the accommodation nor the general learning environment can meet the demands of a rising school population. The facilities are not adequate to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. The current timetable arrangements lead to overcrowded indoor facilities at certain times. For example, students were observed having to use the floor in the shower areas as a changing area and large groups were taught three different activities in a small sports hall by one teacher. In addition the physical education accommodation including the gym, sports hall and main hall, and the floors of the changing rooms are dirty and are not adequately cleaned. The amount of litter around the sports hall and tennis courts is also of concern and present a health and safety issue because of the number of broken metal cans

particularly in the tennis court areas. Overall these conditions are not conducive to raising standards, to motivating the staff or to inspiring young people at the school to participate in physical education and sport and to take a pride in their own environment.

265. There is a particularly high participation rate in the extra-curricular programme. Students further their skills and interests by representing the school and district in a variety of sporting activities. Lunch time clubs observed included table tennis, where students displayed skills of a high standard, benefiting from coaching from a member staff and a sixth form student as part of his enrichment programme; sixth form basketball and netball and football sessions for large numbers of girls. The short lunch break however is not helpful to the provision of these very popular activities. Thriving dance clubs have been established including a boys club called RAGE. Students were observed during the inspection rehearsing energetically with very good support from staff for a production at the Northants Dance Festival. This high quality of provision has been recognised by the renewal of the 'Sportsmark' award by Sport England in 2001.
266. Overall the department is now in a strong position to move forward when the challenge of the unsatisfactory accommodation has been tackled.

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

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
General Studies	4	50	77	0	19	0.5	1.92
Mathematics	2	50	62	0	15	0.5	1.51
Physics	1	0	52	0	4	0	0.9
Spanish	1	100	-	100	-	4	-

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	7	100	96	14	46	4.29	6.57
Biology	6	83	88	33	34	4	5.25
Chemistry	3	100	90	33	43	6.67	5.9
English Language	9	78	91	22	30	3.78	5.27
English Literature	16	94	95	13	37	4.5	5.91
French	2	100	89	100	38	9	5.9
Design and Technology	13	100	91	46	30	6.77	5.38
General Studies	31	87	85	29	30	4.65	4.91
Geography	24	96	92	25	38	5.17	5.74
German	2	100	91	0	40	6	5.81
History	10	70	88	30	35	4.8	5.45
Mathematics	12	92	87	17	43	4.5	5.8
Music	1	100	93	0	35	4.0	5.74
Other Social Studies	9	78	87	33	34	4.67	5.3
Physics	7	57	88	0	40	1.71	5.67
Sociology	9	100	86	56	35	7.11	5.32

Sports / PE studies	21	100	92	5	25	5.05	5.09
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Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	3	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	12	10.45
Health and Social Care	1	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	12	10.79
Leisure and Tourism	6	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	7	10.06

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

267. Advanced level mathematics, biology (including human biology) and physics were inspected in depth. Chemistry results have matched those achieved nationally since 1998 and, in 2001, rose to above the national average.

Sixth Form Mathematics

268. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics provision is good in most respects.

Strengths

- The quality of sixth form mathematics teaching is good.
- Teachers are particularly skilful at explaining complex mathematical concepts and building upon the students' prior learning.
- Teachers have established very good relationships with their students, who have confidence in them
- The examination specifications are made known to students and teachers cover the full range of topics well.

Areas for improvement

- There is very little marking or assessment of students' day to day work; the accuracy and presentation of some students' work suffers as a result.
- Teachers neither routinely encourage students to discuss with one another a variety of approaches to solving a problem, nor help them think conceptually as opposed to simply learning specific methods. The use of open-ended questioning needs developing.

269. In recent years the standards achieved by sixth formers in their A level mathematics examinations have reflected the national averages. Although the 2001 results were lower than those of previous years, the grades reached reflect the school's relatively liberal A level enrolment and entry policy. Boys and girls make equally good progress in this subject. Results in the 2001 AS examination were slightly better than national figures.

270. Students have great faith in their A level mathematics teachers. The work in their exercise books and folders indicates that this confidence is well founded as the topics necessary for success are being covered at an appropriate pace and in sufficient

depth. A level teachers have a sound understanding of their subject and are enthusiastic about teaching their students. They have a well-deserved reputation amongst the students for being caring and willing to give freely of their time to help anyone who is struggling with the work.

271. Lessons observed included both Pure Mathematics and Discrete Mathematics. Two Year 12 lessons were observed; three Year 13 lessons. Mechanics and statistics units were not being taught at the time of the inspection although students' books for these topics were available for scrutiny.
272. The quality of mathematics teaching in the sixth form is always satisfactory and is often good, very good or excellent. It is leading to secure learning in most topics. The very good teaching is characterised by careful planning by the teacher, good use of the time available, structured questioning and very clear explanations of abstract concepts by the teacher.
273. The teachers are very good at pitching questions at the right level for students of varying abilities who may be in the same teaching group. Although one or two students lose confidence as the work becomes more demanding, most are making at least satisfactory progress and many are making good progress, particularly the most able.
274. The teachers engage students in high quality dialogue with them about their prior learning and are skilful in building new learning on this. They do not, however, encourage sufficient debate amongst the students themselves about various approaches to solving problems or open-ended questions. A significant number of students do not move beyond learning facts, concepts and methods and take insufficient responsibility for developing their own learning, especially in the linking of knowledge and skills in order to solve unfamiliar problems and in devising efficient and elegant solutions to complex problems.
275. There has been significant staff turnover in the mathematics department recently as well as syllabus changes. The introduction of new syllabuses has necessitated new schemes of work. At the time of the inspection these were very rudimentary but teachers are building up folders of resource materials and their medium term planning is satisfactory.
276. The attitude of A level mathematics students is very positive and they are keen to learn. Their arithmetic and algebraic skills are well developed but several students experience difficulty with logarithms and exponential functions; calculus is found to be challenging, particularly when it involves trigonometric functions. After some initial hesitancy, students showed a sound understanding of vectors and polynomials, and they have a good grasp of most statistical and mechanics topics. A new module, discrete mathematics, is popular; students and staff are confident that results in this area will be very pleasing and the quality of the students' work reinforces this view.
277. The assessment of students' work needs to be developed by the department. Whilst the formal end of module assessments are marked thoroughly, much day to day work is not marked and a number of mistakes, both in terms of accuracy and methodology, are not pointed out to students, even though teachers go to great lengths to stress the importance of module assessments when they are teaching a topic. Whilst students have a good understanding of the examination requirements in each module they are not sufficiently clear about how marks are awarded for each type of examination question and some have developed habits that could lose them marks because of overly casual presentation.
278. The use of ICT in the teaching of A level mathematics is limited, and students would

benefit from more opportunities to use spreadsheets and modelling programmes in their work. By contrast, students are confident in the use of graphical calculators. There are virtually no occasions when students' A level learning is related either to everyday life or to industrial or commercial practices. Links with other A level subjects are also underdeveloped.

279. The timetabling of mathematics lessons throughout the fortnightly timetable is less than ideal. There is a long gap between lessons and then one A level lesson follows immediately upon the previous one. As a result, students sometimes confuse topics and have too little time between some lessons to digest or reflect on the processes that they have encountered.

Biology

Biology (including human biology)

280. Overall, the quality of provision in Biology is good.

Strengths

- AS results in 2001 were encouraging .
- A significant rise in the number of students taking Biology and Human Biology with a good rate of uptake from AS to A2.
- The subject is well led with the capacity to further develop and improve provision.
- A good range of centralised learning resources is being built up.
- Very good relationships between staff and students.
- Very good relationships between students who work well together and support each other in lessons.
- The use of self-assessment sheets which is helping students to improve standards and become more independent learners.
- The increasing use of attainment data for setting targets which are shared with students.
- The teachers' knowledge of student needs.
- Opportunities outside normal school time, for example, revision days.

Areas for improvement

- To develop further the scheme of work.
- To work closely with the coordinators for science subjects, Years 7 to 9, Years 10 to 11, Years 12 to 13 and Head of Science to share experience, expertise and effective practice to work towards greater consistency within the faculty.

281. A level biology results in summer 2001 were below average and showed a significant dip following a three-year rising trend. No A level results are available for human biology as the current Year 13 is the first cohort of students. AS level results in biology, including human biology, indicate students achieving the grades predicted based on GCSE performance. The inclusive nature of entry to sixth form courses has resulted in a number of students taking the course whose GCSE results suggests that they may have difficulty in coping with the demands of higher level study and very few students achieving the higher grades. Around 90 per cent of AS students have continued with the subject to A2.
282. Seven lessons were observed and all were satisfactory or good. Students' work was analysed and a discussion took place with the coordinator of biology.
283. The quality of AS students' work, as seen in lessons and by analysis of students' folders, matches the pattern of recent AS level results. Most students show a reasonable understanding of basic facts and concepts, such as gaseous exchange in

humans and the light phase of photosynthesis. Practical work is generally well carried out with pupils encouraged to take pride in their written work.

284. The satisfactory teaching lacks stimulus and excitement with a narrow range and variety of methods. In the good lessons students' knowledge, understanding and practical skills are developed and consolidated by a range of carefully planned activities and skilful questioning by the teacher with high expectations of students' responses. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
285. Students' learning is mostly good and they take a keen interest in practical lessons and develop skills well. They are generally attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching that they experience. Past examination questions are used widely in class and for homework including opportunities for extended writing. For example, an essay on the design of the heart in relation to its function. The use of self-study materials and self-assessments sheets are developing students' skills as independent learners. Students feel well supported by their teachers and that they were given good advice on choice of subjects during Y11.
286. Marking is usually good with the work is carefully annotated with corrections and identification of omissions. Students are well aware of how to improve this work.
287. The laboratories are spacious but the furniture and décor in some generate a dreary learning environment. There were some very good displays of students' work on show to celebrate success and give incentive to others, some of which included the use of information communication technology.

Physics

288. Overall, the quality of provision in physics is good.

Strengths

- AS results in 2001 were encouraging with 31 per cent of students achieving the higher grades.
- A rise in the number of students taking physics with a good rate of uptake from AS to A2
- The subject is well led and managed with the capacity to further develop and improve provision.
- Good relationships between staff and students.
- Very good relationships between students who work well together and support each other in lessons.
- The increasing use of data for monitoring progress and setting targets which are shared with students.
- Use of diagnostic assessment and feedback encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The teachers' knowledge of student needs.
- Guidance to students on making notes, presentation of work and revision techniques.
- Encouraging the use of the Internet by students to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- To develop further the scheme of work.
- To plan the purchase of equipment to enhance students experiences (e.g. fluxmeters as opposed to plotting compasses for magnetic field investigations).
- To work closely with the coordinators for science subjects, Years 7 to 9, Years 10 to 11, Years 12 to 13 and head of science to share experience, expertise and effective practice to work towards greater consistency within the faculty.

289. A level results in summer 2001 were well below average which continued a recent downward trend with no students achieving the higher grades. AS level results in physics indicate students achieving at least the grades predicted based on GCSE performance. The inclusive nature of entry to sixth form courses has resulted in a number of students taking the course whose GCSE results suggest that they may have difficulty in coping with the demands of higher level study. Around 80 per cent of AS students have continued with the subject to A2.
290. Students feel well supported by their teachers and that they were given good advice on choice of subjects during Y11.
291. The quality of students' AS work, as seen in lessons and by analysis of students' folders, matches the pattern of recent examination results. Most students show a reasonable understanding of basic facts and concepts, such as resistors in series and parallel and magnetic and electric fields. Practical work is generally well carried out with students encouraged to take pride in their written work. Folders contained evidence of independent work by students using the Internet, for example, work on Rutherford's Scattering experiments.
292. Four lessons were observed and all were satisfactory or good. The satisfactory teaching lacks stimulus and excitement with little variety of method. In the good or very good lessons students' knowledge, understanding and practical skills are developed and consolidated by carefully planned activities and skilful questioning by the teacher. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
293. Students' learning is mostly good and they take a keen interest in practical lessons and develop skills well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching that they experience with written work making good use of summary tables, charts, well-drawn diagrams, bulleted lists and colour.
294. The best marking has clear assessment schemes and the work is carefully annotated with corrections and identification of omissions. Students are well aware of how to improve this work.
295. The laboratories are adequate in size but the furniture and décor generate a dull learning environment. There was little students' work on show to celebrate success and give incentive to others but there was a good display of 'Physics in Higher Education'.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

296. Advanced level design and technology, including resistant materials and graphics, was inspected in depth.

Design and technology

297. Design and technology is studied at AS and A level via resistant materials and graphics
298. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is very good.

Strengths

- Standards at A level are well above national average.
- Teaching is mostly very good; teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare lessons well.

- A good range of appropriate and up-to-date resources are in use to support teaching and learning.
- Students feel very well supported by their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Direct input into the course from adults from industrial and commercial contexts to enhance the relevance of the coursework
- Promotion of the course with aspiring A2 students in order to sustain course viability and quality, and increase participation

299. A level results in both 2000 and 2001 were good. In 2001, most students gained grade 'C' or better. The average points score compared very well with the national pattern in the subject. The results also compare well when considering the performance of the same students in their other subjects at Wollaston School. The girls did significantly better than the boys.
300. The standard of work seen during the inspection is above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well and making very good progress. They showed good understanding of the flexibility of commercial computer aided design and computer aided machinery use in small batch production, compared with traditional methods of design and manufacture. They provided illustrative examples to support the new information being advanced by the teacher, which demonstrated their understanding of commercial factors and approaches to practical production. Students knew the differences between die-casting and sand casting and the melting point of aluminium. Overall, students adopted safe working practices.
301. Graphics is a new course this year in Year 12. At this early stage, students are often achieving above expectations. For example, they were quick to gain practical ability upon first encountering the computer program 'Pro Desktop'. They displayed confidence and were quick to realise the potential of the package for their own work and in the industrial context. In resistant materials, students also present ideas to a very high standard both with, and without, the computer. Presentational skills are a clear strength in design and technology, reflecting the expertise and creativity of the teaching team.
302. Four lessons were observed. Most of the teaching seen was very good, and this supported effective learning. Teachers bring energy to their lessons and have high expectations. They cater well for the needs of individuals. Lesson objectives are made explicit and explained at the start of the lesson and understanding is checked regularly. For example, in a graphics lesson where students were being taught using a multi- media projector, the teacher regularly checked that all students understood and were keeping up. Those falling behind were quickly identified and assisted. The Year 12 resistant materials course handbook supports learning very well, reflecting course requirements, assessment criteria, grade descriptions, and related web site addresses. Homework is set and followed up regularly, and supports learning well. A relative weakness is when the teacher fails to check effectively the students' understanding of new learning.
303. Students enjoy their design and technology and make very good progress. The Year 13 resistant materials group made very good progress during a lesson because the very good planning and preparation by the teacher.
304. One of the lesson plans for the Year 12 resistant materials group included provision for two specified students which met their needs and ensured their good progress. In

a graphics lesson, the teacher sat alongside a student with special learning needs and taught the lesson from that area of the room. This allowed the student to be supported very effectively and ensured that the student made excellent progress. Technical support staff make a valuable contribution to learning. A wide range of resources, including computer packages and up to date tools and equipment, support learning well. Visits to commercial premises support classroom learning well. The head of faculty is right to see as a priority the need to bring visitors from industrial contexts into lessons.

305. The faculty is well led. There is clear determination to build upon the good results of 2001 through continuous improvement of all aspects of faculty work. Resources are well chosen and well managed. There is considerable and varied expertise and experience within the staff team. Faculty improvement planning is good, but monitoring and evaluation still require further development.

BUSINESS

306. The focus of the inspection for this area was on business at advanced supplementary level, intermediate GNVQ business and advanced vocational business.

Business Studies

307. Overall, quality of provision in business studies is good.

Strengths

- Standards are above the national average in both advanced and intermediate business.
- Students have a sound grasp of business theories and principles, apply them well in class and in their assignments, and overall are achieving well.
- Teaching is good; lesson objectives are shared with students, teachers good subject knowledge/expertise is used well to help students build their knowledge and improve their understanding.
- Very good relationships between teachers and their students enable a positive ethos for business learning which enables students to sustain concentration.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well.
- Students learning is improved by their involvement in, for example, the ProShare Investors 2002 competition or Young Enterprise.
- The subject is well led.

Areas for improvement

- The links with a range of local companies is not sufficiently well developed to extend vocational/business learning.
- Students who have not studied GCSE business are not sufficiently supported so that they can achieve high grades.
- Monitoring of the department requires improvement to ensure consistently high standards for all students.

308. The advanced vocational examination results this summer are well above the national average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and all the girls gained a distinction. Each year, since 1999 the results at the school have been significantly above the national average. All students who were entered, for intermediate vocational business gained the qualification. In relation to GCSE results, they did better than expected. A few students with modest GCSE results did very

well. The numbers studying business are increasing. Students who study business invariably complete the course, and those studying intermediate business continue onto the advanced course although a few take up appropriate employment at the end of the intermediate stage.

309. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a result of teaching which demanded much of them. In one lesson questioning was used well to bring out key business legal terminology so that students could use their understanding in an industrial relations role-play. Very good rapport between the teacher and students promoted high expectations and a desire to learn and do well. In consequence, students explained their thinking behind their roles, for example as Managing Director. All students had gained a good understanding of business terminology such as 'closed shop', 'go-slow' and delegation and spoke confidently both about how they would use these terms in their assignment, and what they had to do in order to achieve good marks.
310. Students in Year 12 studying AS level show good knowledge of Henry Ford's strategy to double workers wages because of increased profitability and productivity and to reduce the numbers resigning because they had to carry out repetitive, boring jobs on assembly lines. A relatively weak feature of lessons is the dominance of the teacher throughout the lesson and the use of a narrow range of teaching styles, which results in some loss of attention by some students. In these larger groups, there is insufficient guidance and focus to ensure that those students who have not studied GCSE business are understanding what they are learning and are provided with the individual support to enable them to achieve the higher grades.
311. Students in Year 12 studying Intermediate business are able to explain readily laws affecting company promotional activities, such as the Trade Descriptions Act and Sales of Goods Act. In one lesson very good relationships, careful planning and appropriate handouts promoted an effective ethos for learning. This led to students, including those with special needs, sustaining their concentration throughout the lesson and in enabling them to explain for example, how products have to be of merchantable quality or 'fit for the purpose' and the broad functions of the Advertising Standards Authority.
312. Students learn well as a result of the good and sometimes very good teaching. The principal features of teaching are clear lesson objectives closely linked to course requirements, with constant checks made by teachers throughout lessons that students are understanding. Handouts support learning well. Teaching promotes independent learning, in particular, research using internet web-sites and the use of computers to present work.
313. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the high standards expected of them. In lessons, time is used well with appropriate reference to books, computers or videos to secure business knowledge and its application in the commercial world. Students support and help each other and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning, frequently building on points made by their peers in discussion. Most students recall knowledge well and apply it both in class and in their assignments. However, insufficient links have yet been established with a range of local companies to deepen student business understanding and application, throughout their studies.

314. Small numbers of students successfully take their business learning beyond the classroom. For example Year 13 students are in first place in the national ProShare Student Investor 2002 competition. Students value the business understanding and the learning experience they gain through Young Enterprise, even if their company is not always a commercial success.
315. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Assessment criteria are used well to ensure students studying vocational business are clear about what they have to do to achieve high grades. However, Y12 students who have not studied GCSE business studies feel less well supported and spoke of how they would welcome more specific guidance when using assessment grids as well more information about what they need to do to gain higher grades in examinations. Some evaluation of the work of the department takes place, but this needs strengthening.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

316. Advanced level art and design was inspected in depth. Music was sampled in one lesson. The teaching of music is very good with particularly well planned lessons enable students to each follow an individual programme of learning. Students achieve good standards at both A/S and A level.

Art and Design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good
- There is high quality guidance to students
- There are very good relationships

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use ICT through improved access to the relevant equipment.

318. Very small numbers of students have been entered for A level Art and Design over the past four years, and there were no candidates in 1999. In 2000 and 2001 all candidates achieved pass grades, but the percentage of higher grades achieved was below average.
319. During the inspection, the work seen in lessons, in students' portfolios and displayed in art rooms and other areas of the school suggests that standards are improving. In Year 12, students showed that they are working from a range of well-developed skills. They combine formal elements well and show good design sense. In working towards the Expressive Study unit they respond well to targets set for them by their teachers and take an experimental approach. They make extensive reference to the work of a range of established artists, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Kandinsky and Warhol, and also relate their work to discussions of exhibitions and television documentaries they have seen. Year 13 students have produced a body of work containing some pieces of a very mature quality. They too have well-developed skills, and the quality of painting is particularly strong. They show thoughtful, intelligent selection from source material, and take inspiration from well-researched background studies and the work of established artists. For example, Boccioni paintings influenced the choice of motifs for a large wall hanging, contributed to by three

students as part of the preparation for the problem-solving unit. Standards amongst the current Year 12 and 13 students are high, and above average overall.

320. Three lessons were observed. Standards are improving as a result of teaching which is consistently good or very good. Teachers are practising artists in their own right and have very good knowledge of what they are talking about. They are prepared to use their own skills to demonstrate, to share ideas, to encourage a spirit of experimentation. They challenge and make demands on students, setting individual patterns of study and agreeing targets for the completion of work. Teachers prepare students for examinations well. They analyse the requirements of each part of the syllabus, and interpret them in terms of each student's personal interests and strengths.
321. The quality of advice and guidance given to students is excellent. Students are given one to one meetings to discuss their work and to develop their portfolios. There is regular interim assessment of project work, and the judgements are used to direct the next stage of the work. Teachers conduct mock interviews to help students prepare for college interviews, and potential applicants are put in touch with former students who have followed the same course. There is regular correspondence with parents, explaining the artwork with which the student is engaged, describing ways in which the work can be developed successfully and explaining how parents can help. Students are encouraged to involve their parents in discussions about their artwork.
322. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. Students show a high level of interest in each other's work and transfer thoughts and make connections with their own projects. The good relationships with teachers encourage students to contribute and exchange ideas, for example, in a Year 13 lesson, an unprompted debate about the role of art in society ensued from some informal anecdotes about a visit to an exhibition. Students readily expressed the high regard in which they hold their teachers.
323. The department is well resourced, and offers students the opportunity to experiment in a wide range of media. Opportunities to use computers are sometimes missed because currently, equipment is not always readily available, though this is soon to be redressed. There is also a need to encourage more impromptu use of computers when experimenting or developing ideas.

HUMANITIES

324. Advanced level geography was inspected in depth. One lesson was observed in sociology, two in psychology and one in RE. Teaching in RE was good and in sociology and psychology it was excellent. No students undertook A level RE within the last two years and so national comparisons of standards are not relevant but achievements in lessons was well in line with A level standards. Standards are high in sociology and psychology.

Geography

325. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Well prepared lessons with good opportunities for students to participate.
- Conscientious and constructive marking of work and availability of staff to support students.

- Students enjoy the subject and show a good attitude and understanding in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- There is no systematic programme of monitoring of students to ensure that they are working at the level of their expected grades.
- Students folders are not checked periodically to ensure that their notes are sufficiently detailed and accurate.

326. Numbers taking the subject at GCE A level have not been higher than 13 until 2001 when 24 candidates were entered, 23 of whom were successful in achieving a pass grade. This was a high pass rate but the percentage of students achieving A, B, or C grades was only 39 per cent which is well below the national average. In terms of the average points score this was also below the national average but not

significantly so. The first set of AS results in 2001 were below national figures and of the 14 students who continued on the course into the second year no student gained more than a C grade. However standards of work seen in both the current Year 12 and Year 13 suggest that there are students capable of gaining the highest grades.

327. In the best lessons students are allowed to show what they know and understand and then are offered good opportunities to make further progress. This is done through skilful questioning by teachers who recap on learning from previous lessons and by challenging exercises which test understanding. One example of such exercises was a Year 12 lesson in which students had to match up written, map, and photographic evidence on housing types in four different parts of a city. In some lessons, however, opportunities to involve students were not taken and teachers simply provided information which could have been gleaned by questioning. On occasion, teachers' subject knowledge had some shortcomings. For example, in one lesson a diagram provided by the teacher was incorrect and would certainly have led to a loss of marks in an examination if it had been reproduced. The use of time is not always planned well. For example, in a lesson a potentially useful summary sheet was given to students including the main headings for the topic but not enough time was allowed for students to add extra information because the discussion was moved on too quickly.

328. A good level of understanding was shown by students in lessons, for example, when discussing the importance of factors such as accessibility and transport to explain land use in the Central Business District. Students identified changes taking place in land use in urban areas such as the development of retail parks and the effects on traditional shopping centres. In a Year 13 revision lesson students correctly discussed the main inputs and outputs in terms of population change and the effects of economic development on rates of natural increase in population. Some high quality written work was seen, including an essay on the Three Gorges Project in China, in which the advantages and disadvantages were well explained. Another piece of work on the River Nene flooding in 1998 accurately analysed the causes both in terms of the weather conditions and the poor defences; the failure to forecast the floods and the devastating human consequences were also well described and good understanding of the issues was shown. Some students' folders of work in both years were very detailed with carefully set out notes and well-labelled diagrams and graphs, especially on the physical geography section of the course; others were disorganised and lacked sufficient detail to provide a good basis for revision. For a topic in human geography students had carried out data analysis using a statistical test and drawn a related scatter graph; however one student had put a best-fit line on the scatter graph inaccurately, and this had not been corrected.

329. The last inspection report said that there had been a consistent lack of higher grades among the small numbers of students taking 'A' level. That problem still exists. The report also stated that sixth-form teaching lacked opportunities for independent investigative study. This criticism has been addressed, for example, at AS level the students have to carry out an Environmental Investigation (a small group or individual piece of fieldwork) and write a report of 2500 words. At A2 the students have to research a topic such as *Pollution* or *Hazards* and write a report of 1500 words. The current Year13 carried out a piece of fieldwork (during Year12) on coastal erosion and sand dunes in Dorset and this provided an excellent opportunity for group work and independent follow up.
330. Accommodation for sixth form teaching, as in the main school, is not ideal. Some lessons take place in a mobile classroom, well away from the humanities suite, and this makes the provision of adequate resources for teaching and learning very difficult. Many of the books in the library are dated.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

331. A level English (including English language and English literature) and French were inspected in depth. German was sampled and the teaching was good. German was sampled in Year 12. Standards in German are above average in all skills, supported by good teaching and learning, and very good attitudes. The lesson was conducted entirely in the spoken language, providing suitable challenge to which students responded well.

English and English Literature

332. Overall, the quality of provision in English and English Literature is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Good relationships between students and teachers which enable a spirit of purposeful learning to be established and sustained in lessons.
- Teachers' secure knowledge of the texts for study.
- Clarity of explanations offered which enable students to understand thoroughly difficult areas of study.

Areas for improvement

- Match work more closely to students' abilities.
- Provide opportunities for independence in learning.

333. In A Level examinations in English Language in 2001 students attained results that were well below national averages for the highest grades and for grades A-E overall. The pattern of attainment has not been consistent over the past three years, but has been below national averages in 2000 and 2001. Girls have achieved results significantly below those attained nationally in this period. In A Level examinations for English Literature, results at higher grades were well below those achieved nationally at 2001 but the pattern of attainment at grades A-E is the same as the national picture.
334. Standards of attainment in lessons and in the work scrutinised during the inspection also reveal an inconsistent pattern of attainment in English and English Literature, reflecting students' prior attainment. Too few students are currently attaining the higher grades. Although attainment in lessons is almost always satisfactory, students do not reach the highest standards in their lessons or in their coursework.

335. Students studying AS Level Language undertake close textual analysis and identify with some confidence key features of pronunciation and vocabulary in a transcript of a tape recording of a dialect speaker. They are much less secure in their grammatical understanding and less alert to the significance of syntax in their overall analysis. This inhibits their progress significantly, since they are unable to move from the identification of specific and context-dependent features of language to wider generalisations. Where teaching addresses these issues - for example in a lesson where an explicit framework was provided for looking at formality and gender representation - students make better progress in developing their understandings. Although students are fizzing with ideas in response to the texts they are studying, their approach to text deconstruction is unsystematic and consequently too often superficial.
336. Students studying AS Literature show a good intuitive understanding of their reading and some perceptive insights. They cross-refer appropriately to previous study they have undertaken and show a sophisticated understanding, for example in their appreciation of the irony of the Wife of Bath citing references to St. Paul as a justification for her promiscuity. However, they find less familiar aspects of textual study more difficult, and do not sustain a consistent focus on aspects of writers' language when writing about novels, plays and poems. Writing about literature - for example in an essay exploring 'A Winter's Tale' - is often clunky, moving from quotation to quotation in a series of disconnected jumps without the support of a continuous and developing argument.
337. Students in the lessons observed were enthusiastic about their studies and appreciative of their teachers. In lessons students are responsive to new ideas, take notes assiduously, are confident in seeking clarification and interested in their subject. More able students do not always push themselves in lessons - for example, when working on advertisements, the most able boys in the group lost interest having completed the task, while students of lower prior attainment showed greater persistence and more willingness to collaborate to achieve a better and more worthwhile result. Similarly, when studying Chaucer, some students disengaged from the text once they found it too difficult, leaving other students to struggle successfully to work out a viable interpretation.
338. Teaching in the sixth form was consistently satisfactory or better. The best teaching skilfully maintained the balance between supporting struggling students and giving sufficient independence to more able students, who require space to develop without necessarily actually wanting it. Less successful teaching was characterised by conscientious line-by-line analysis of the texts by the teacher and too little engagement and activity by the students. Teachers are not always sufficiently insistent that students work to their fullest potential in lessons. The review of work in folders indicates that there has been neither consistency of approach nor consistency of teacher in the recent past and this has had an adverse impact on the standards achieved. There has been a lack of rigour and focus in the assessment of work and too little insistence on ensuring students make progress from one piece of work to the next. Recent coursework has been both more carefully structured and more systematically and thoroughly assessed, and contains appropriate advice and guidance about how to improve.

Sixth Form Literacy

339. In the sixth form the majority of students attain standards of literacy that enable them to benefit fully from the opportunities presented by the curriculum. Students undertake substantial extended pieces of writing and carry out independent research, for example into the Trades Descriptions Act. The construction of longer, more formal, pieces of writing is on occasion of a very high standard: a catering report on the

school's cafeteria was well-constructed, showing awareness of the conventions of a formal report, and the minutes of the Sixth Form Committee were of exceptional quality, written with sophisticated expression and assured control of tone. Attainment in speaking and listening is almost always high. Students are amusing and confident, sensitive to humour and to irony and able to talk to unfamiliar adults about their work and their school informatively and wittily.

340. For a small proportion of pupils relatively low attainment in literacy constrains their attainment and prevents them fulfilling their potential in the subject. A student who was able to articulate a good understanding of business practice was hampered from translating this into writing because of poor basic skills. Pupils do not always make the progress that they should, particularly in writing skills, because the teaching of literacy is inconsistent between subject areas and key messages about expectations of the quality of written work in particular are not made clear across the whole curriculum. Students' learning benefits and attainment rises when the teachers are attentive to students' literacy needs, for example, in fostering the development of their subject specific vocabulary in design technology .

Modern Foreign Languages

French

341. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Standards are above the national average in Year 13. Students make good progress and achieve well.
- Students are highly motivated and enjoy responding to challenge. Through the contributions they make to lessons they enrich each other's learning.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are excellent linguists and plan well-structured lessons with a range of stimulating activities. Students are very appreciative of the help they receive.
- Marking and assessment of work is good; students are well informed of their standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards vary between the AS and A2 courses, and are average in Year 12.
- There is insufficient planning to meet individual students' needs in the range of attainment in Year 12
- The school has no formal links with France. Students have little or no first-hand experience of the country and culture.

342. The GCE A level examination results are consistently above the national average, although in the past from very small entries. Since the last inspection most students have obtained grades A to C. Class sizes have now grown considerably. The current Year 13 class of six students completed their AS level examination earlier this term, most of them with predicted grades in the A-C range. They continue to make good progress towards A level and achieve well. There is a wider range of attainment in the Year 12 AS level group of twelve students. All were graded between A* and B at GCSE, but their progress is uneven and overall standards are around grade C, average for the course.

343. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average for the A Level course. Essays are rich in ideas and expression and are clearly constructed. Earlier work from Year 12 shows how over the year students learnt to assimilate specific topic vocabulary and phrases and to organise their ideas coherently and logically. They can now

confidently present both sides of an issue, and express a personal view, on increasingly complex social and moral subjects, for example in pieces on single parents and immigration. There are still occasional slips in basic agreements and verb forms, and expression is safe rather than adventurous, but their work is individually researched and shows an increasing awareness of style and register.

344. The content of essays is good because the students transfer to their writing the wealth of language they hear and speak in lessons. Year 13 are not yet fluent or totally confident, but most can paraphrase and improvise effectively. They hear the language spoken at authentic pace on tape or by the teachers and are encouraged to improvise their own replies, gradually gaining more confidence and independence as they learn from each other. One lesson observed exemplifies the students' good progress over the two years. Students first absorbed vocabulary from a video of a French television gameshow and then compared the style of presentation and entertainment value with the British equivalent. Following this stimulus, other activities, including consolidation exercises on the placing of object pronouns and a revision quiz on the characters in Camus's 'L'Etranger', were practised exclusively in French. The teacher's questions were designed at an increasing level of difficulty, so that the students moved from merely factual answers to opinions and speculation.
345. Some Year 12 students are making very good progress, consolidating earlier work on tenses and adding more complex structures. They begin to write in a discursive style, as in an essay on the vegetarianism. In general, however, students are still reliant on seeing tape transcript before they have the confidence to explain or paraphrase what they hear. Some are hesitant because they lack basic vocabulary to substantiate an opinion or to add further detail. Students gain considerably from their sessions with the French Assistant, although most have still to develop a more convincing intonation, and few speak the language spontaneously.
346. Four lessons were observed, two each in Years 12 and 13. Teaching is good: lively, motivating and effective because it is based on excellent command of the language. Teachers use the spoken language to set appropriately high expectations in all skills. They reinforce known work, and explore and extend the language which students can use for themselves. They use tape, tape transcript and text, on a wide variety of social, political and moral subjects, to provide a suitably demanding context for new vocabulary and ideas. Constructive relationships contribute to an atmosphere in which students feel they can take risks in finding the right word or phrase. Some teaching is very good, striking the right balance between closely structured support and high-level challenge where students are required to think for themselves. Marking and assessment are thorough, with full diagnostic comment, and students are well informed of their standards and how to improve. Students speak warmly of the enthusiasm which teachers convey, and with gratitude for their support. Some teaching is not quite so effective because the planning of tasks does not meet the varying attainment levels of the students. In Year 13, the level of some grammar reinforcement activities is unnecessary for higher attaining students with realistic A level ambitions, yet, on other occasions, especially in Year 12, not enough support is provided to help students use successfully very demanding tape extracts before they see the full transcript. In these cases, the level of challenge is too demanding for some, but undemanding for others.
347. In both years learning is good. Year 13 students respond thoughtfully and maturely to the teachers' challenge and prompting. They contribute significantly to their own progress, most organising their files methodically, researching thoroughly and writing extensively. In class, their well-developed learning skills and high levels of motivation help sustain the challenging pace of teaching and so maximise the use of time. They

apply vocabulary specific to the topic in growingly confident paraphrase, as in a lesson based on a text discussing the importance of money. In Year 12 learning is good because teaching ensures effectively that students practise the language, and improve their understand of authentic French. However, the development of oral and written skills is sometimes slow when students are not given support, such as key words or phrases, or tasks which would enable them to produce their own summaries of what they hear, and learn to paraphrase and improvise more confidently.

348. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are higher, and teaching is better. However, the school no longer has formal links with France and students have little or no first-hand experience of the country. Students compensate to a degree through video and the Internet, but overall they show too little awareness or appreciation of the country or culture.
349. The new head of department shows qualities of good leadership, and has identified how provision can be improved. The Year 12 curriculum needs to be planned to cater more appropriately for the wide range of prior attainment at GCSE. Links with France need rebuilding so that opportunities for studying or working in the country are made available as part of the course.