

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ST BARTHOLOMEW'S SCHOOL**

Newbury

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110098

Headteacher: Mr S J Robinson

Reporting inspector: Philip J H O'Neill  
3162

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 October 2001

Inspection number: 189988

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Andover Road Newbury Berkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I M Campbell
Date of previous inspection:	17 October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
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			Sociology	
11094	Ian Blair	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development The school's care for its students
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Design and technology	Curricular and other opportunities for students
30695	Geraldine Dinan	Team inspector	Art and design	
4426	Terry Fitchett	Team inspector	French	
			German	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	Biology	
			Chemistry	
8501	Paul Hartwright	Team inspector		English as an additional language, equal opportunities
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	Special educational needs
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
2200	Jim Stirrup	Team inspector	English	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Bartholomew's is a split-site, mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 – 18. The school was established in 1975 by the amalgamation of two grammar schools: it is now designated a Foundation School, having formerly been managed as a grant maintained school for four years. There are 1627 students on roll (823 boys, 804 girls) of whom 387 (199 boys, 188 girls) are in the sixth form. Since the last inspection, sixth form numbers have declined from 698 to 387, as a result of the development of four other sixth forms in the area. The numbers in the main school have risen from 900 to 1240. Most students are from relatively advantaged social backgrounds and the proportion eligible for free school meals, at two per cent, is well below the national average. Few students speak English as an additional language. At three per cent, the proportion of students coming from ethnic minority groups is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs, at 12 per cent, is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students with a Statement of Special Educational Need, at less than one per cent. Last year 33 students joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission, whilst 48 students left the school other than at the usual time of leaving. The percentage of students continuing with full-time education after the age of sixteen, at 89 per cent, is high. About 80 per cent of students enrolled for courses in higher or further education in 2000 after completing sixth form courses at the school. The school is oversubscribed. Pupils join the school with above average levels of attainment.

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

St Bartholomew's is a very good and improving school, achieving high standards. Through dynamic and imaginative leadership it is effective in creating a rich environment for learning where all students thrive. The students come to school confident that they will be taught well. The leadership team has been assiduous in exploiting every possible source of funding and resources, using them well to extend the range of the students' opportunities for learning. The sixth form is very effective in providing a wide and stimulating range of courses and experiences for the students. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The overall standards achieved across the school are good.
- The students experience a high proportion of good and very good teaching.
- The sixth form is very effective in extending the horizons of its students.
- Students' attitudes to the school and to their work are very positive and they behave very well.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the support he is given by the senior staff and governors are very effective in promoting high standards.

#### **What could be improved**

- Many students do not make enough progress in the development of their skills in information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The use of assessment is not sufficiently refined to support all students in their learning.
- The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory.

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

The school's many strengths far outweigh its weaknesses.



## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996 and has made good progress since then and maintained high standards. It has done well to manage so smoothly the transition to its new status as a Foundation School. The reduction in the size of the sixth form and the overall rapid increase in numbers in the main school have been handled with great skill and with sensitivity to the implications for teachers. Issues raised at the last inspection were decisively addressed by a well thought-out action plan. The overall quality of teaching has improved through astute monitoring and appropriate support for teachers who experience difficulties. Planning for the future development of the school is now on a firmer footing. There has been considerable improvement in the use of tutor time. The statutory requirements relating to the provision of religious education and physical education are now met fully. Though the school continues to fail to meet the requirement for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students, what it does provide is thoughtfully worked out, providing students with opportunities for reflection and prayer. The health and safety policy is firmly in place. Information on students coming to the school with special educational needs is now carefully gathered and used well to work out appropriate programmes of learning for these students. The school has the drive, the imagination and the quality of staff to bring about further significant improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

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

In the 2000 tests for 14-year-olds, in comparison with all schools nationally, students' average point scores in English, mathematics and science were well above average. In relation to similar schools the attainment of students was well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Girls did better than boys in English, albeit to a lesser extent than nationally. In mathematics, boys did slightly better than girls. In science, boys did better than girls to a greater extent than nationally. The attainments of students from ethnic minority groups show a similar pattern to those of their peers. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is on a rising trend, similar to the national trend. Teachers' assessments of 14 year-olds in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages show good levels of attainment. Girls' attainment in design and technology and in history is particularly impressive. Attainment in information technology was considerably lower than in other subjects at this age.

In 2000 the average points score at GCSE was well above average in relation to all schools and average for similar schools. In relation to schools with similar prior attainment, results at GCSE were average. Overall, girls have been consistently doing better than boys, to the

same extent as nationally. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve at levels comparable to those of their peers. The proportion of students achieving A\*-C grades was well above average in art and design, English literature, geography, German, history and information technology; above average in combined science, design and technology, drama, English language and physical education; and below average in combined design and technology and French. The school's results show a rising trend broadly in line with the national trend. The most recent (2001) unconfirmed results point to a significant improvement in attainment at the age of 16.

In the sixth form, the average points score of students taking two or more A-levels in 2000 was similar to that of all students nationally. If one includes the most recent (2001) unconfirmed results, standards at A-Level show a rising trend.

Students' attainment on entry is overall above average, though there is a significant proportion of students joining the school with low levels of attainment. Most students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry as they move through Years 7 to 9. They continue this good level of achievement as they pursue their courses at GCSE. Students are, however, slow to build their skills in information and communication technology. In general, students in the sixth form make good advances in the development of their knowledge and skills in relation to their predicted grades.

The school has set and met challenging targets for attainment.

### **STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	The great majority of students are highly motivated. They are good listeners who concentrate well on their tasks. They value what the school provides for them and participate enthusiastically in lessons and activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most students behave very well in lessons and around the school. The behaviour of a few students is less good and sometimes impedes the learning of other students. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between students and between students and staff are friendly and constructive. Students respond well to the opportunities that are offered to them to take responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Good. Students are punctual to lessons, which start and end on time.

Students speak warmly about their experience at the school. They develop good strong critical attitudes. They behave very well, not from the constraint of rules but from an awareness of what makes for a strong community of learners.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	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.*

The quality of teaching is good overall, with much that is very good and some that is outstanding. There is a small measure of unsatisfactory teaching. English, mathematics and science are well taught across the school. A marked feature of much teaching is the teachers' depth and breadth of knowledge, allied to an enthusiasm for what they teach. Lessons are hives of productive activity where all students, irrespective of talent or temperament, are helped to achieve to the fullest extent of their competence. A defining feature of the school is the effort it makes to include all students in the full range of learning opportunities. This is particularly true of the sixth form. These efforts are weakened to some extent, however, by the occasional lack of refinement in the teachers' assessment of the students' attainment and of their barriers to learning. Literacy and numeracy are taught well across the school. In the sixth form, the key skills in the application of number and communication are taught well across the subjects. There are weaknesses in the teaching of information and communication technology across subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers students a good range of opportunities for learning. It does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students, but what it does offer helps students to reflect on matters of concern to them.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Students with special educational needs are well supported and, in relation to their prior attainment, make as much progress as their peers.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The school has a small number of students for whom English is an additional language. The provision made for these students is good.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides well for the personal development of its students, with particular strengths in the provision for moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its students	The school cares well for its students. Procedures for ensuring their health and safety are very good. Arrangements for monitoring students' progress are satisfactory and improving. The use of assessment tends to lack the refinement needed to help students to improve.

The school works well with parents and readily arranges opportunities for individual parents to discuss their children's progress. A real strength is the extent to which the arrangements

for setting by attainment work to the advantage of all students, irrespective of prior attainment or talent. The school is deeply committed to ensuring that the principles of equality of opportunity and justice permeate its life. This is a school where all students feel that they will get a fair chance to succeed. A key factor in all of this is the effectiveness of the house system.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and management ensure that the school is driven by a clear sense of purpose.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are interested and active. They visit the school regularly and are well-informed about the life of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school takes great care to review and improve what it offers the students. There is a very good overall strategy for shaping the direction of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Governors and staff are closely involved in ensuring that the school's funds and resources are directed towards its agreed priorities.

The school is very well endowed with experienced and appropriately qualified staff. There is a very good range of learning resources. Accommodation is adequate but cramped; what is provided for art is unsatisfactory. The school takes great care to compare the cost and benefit of what it provides with the cost of provision in similar schools.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children are happy in school</li> <li>• the progress made by their children</li> <li>• that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best</li> <li>• that they find it easy to approach the school with questions or concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the behaviour of some students</li> <li>• the provision of homework</li> <li>• the information about their children's progress</li> <li>• the way the school works with parents to support their children's learning</li> </ul>

Inspection findings confirm that the majority of students are happy with the experience the school offers. Students are expected to work hard and they make good progress. Teachers are very willing to meet parents who have questions or concerns. The inspection confirms the parents' view that there are a few students whose behaviour impedes the learning of others. Some parents think that there is insufficient homework, while others believe that there is too much. The inspection finds that, overall, the provision of homework is appropriate and supportive of students' learning. The inspection finds that the school offers a good level of information to parents.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form in this large school has 387 students on roll, of whom 199 are boys and 188 are girls. Since the last inspection, sixth form numbers have declined from 698 to 387, whilst the numbers in the main school have risen from 900 to 1240. This change has resulted from the development of four other sixth forms in the area. The sixth form annually attracts large numbers from other schools. The students have a wide range of subjects and vocational courses from which to choose. The great majority of the students continue from Year 11 into the sixth form. Overall results at GCSE are average in relation to schools with the same level of attainment on joining the courses. All students joining the sixth form study three or four subjects in Year 12, depending on their results at GCSE, and, in addition, all students take the general studies course to AS-level. Generally, boys and girls are evenly represented across the courses. About 80 per cent of students enrolled for courses in higher or further education in 2000 after completing sixth form courses at the school.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This is a very good sixth form. It is very well led in discharging its responsibilities to the students and in ensuring that they all follow courses best fitting their interests and talents and are supported in achieving to the full extent of their capabilities. It is very cost effective given the wide range of courses it offers, the number of students it attracts, the results it achieves through good teaching, the quality of the students' learning, and the rapid rate with which it has improved and adapted to the challenge posed by competing sixth form provision.

**Strengths**

- The quality of teaching, in particular the high level of specialist knowledge demonstrated by the teachers, leads to stimulating lessons where students at all levels of attainment are given a fair chance to succeed.
- The students' attitudes and their willingness to take responsibility lead to good learning.
- Very good leadership and management provide clear direction and purpose to staff and students.

**What could be improved**

- The quality of support and guidance provided for the students, including careers guidance, is not always clear enough or specific enough to be helpful.
- The use of information and communication technology in subjects is too limited and not planned well enough to ensure that students' skills develop progressively.

*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	<b>Good.</b> Although results at A-level have fluctuated from below to above average, standards in work seen are above average. Students achieve well in relation to the very varied levels of attainment on joining their courses. Students are taught well and are good learners. The subject is well led.
Chemistry	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results at A-level are average. Most students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment on joining their course. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are not enough opportunities for students to work independently. Students are unclear about how to improve their work. Leadership is satisfactory.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Attainment at A-level is average. This represents good achievement in relation to the students' GCSE results. Teaching is good. Experimental work is used well to extend students' understanding. Students are not given clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. The subject is well led.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards in the A-level design and technology course are very high in food and textiles and average in resistant materials and graphics. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. The feedback from assessment is a good feature of classroom practice. Good leadership supports the work of teachers well.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Results were above average in 2000 in business studies A-level and in the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in Business. Teaching is good, as is the management of the subject. Marking is not always clear enough about how students should improve their work.
Computing	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results in computing at A-level are variable. Last year the provisional results show that the standard was below the national average but the standard had been well above the national average in the previous two years. Teaching is satisfactory. Students do not achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Leadership is satisfactory.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Students achieved average results in the A-level examination in 2000. They experience good teaching and achieve well in relation to the course requirements. Students engage in their work with confidence and enthusiasm. The department is well managed.
Art and design	<b>Excellent.</b> A-level results have been above average and show a rising trend. Teaching is very good: the use teachers make of assessment is a particular strength. The department is excellently led and going from strength to strength.

Drama and theatre studies	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching and good management ensure that the students make good advances in learning, building effectively on the good standards they bring to the course. Results at A-level have been good.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Results at A-level are above average and rising. Students achieve well because of very good teaching and good management. They apply themselves very well to their work.
History	<b>Excellent.</b> A-level results are well above average. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the quality of teaching is very good. Students make very good advances in learning. The subject is very well managed
Sociology	<b>Excellent.</b> This is a thriving department where results far outstrip the national averages at A-level. Consistently very good teaching and management create real enthusiasm for the subject. Students achieve very well and are very good learners.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Results at A-level have been well above average. A particular strength is the quality of the students' investigations, showing a good commitment to work. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment on starting the course, as a result of good teaching. In some lessons, however, students' ideas are not tested enough through discussion and debate. The subject is well led.
English	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve above average results at A-level. Good teaching helps them to build well on their achievements at GCSE. The students enjoy their work. Good management ensures continued improvement.
French	<b>Good.</b> Results in A-Level are slightly above average. Students achieve well, supported by good teaching. They have a real enthusiasm for the subject. Good leadership provides good support for the teachers.
German	<b>Good.</b> Results at A-Level are average. Standards seen in lessons and in the students' work are good. Teaching is a particular strength, resulting in good progress and achievement. Leadership and management are good.

Economics, politics, philosophy, physics, general studies and the two advanced certificate in vocational education courses were also sampled. Students produce some very good work in economics as a result of stimulating teaching. The strength in politics lies in the teacher's infectious enthusiasm for the subject and the breadth and depth of knowledge that inform teaching. The students attain well and develop considerable sophistication in the analysis of political issues. Very good teaching ensures rapid advances in learning in physics. The work is often closely related to their personal interests and concerns. The philosophy course provides students so inclined with an opportunity to pursue conceptual issues with considerable precision. The students following the course show particularly good skills in researching sources independently, many of them, for example, handling with

confidence some of the more demanding writings of St Anselm on the existence of God and of David Hume on miracles. General studies, a compulsory course for all students in Year 12, is a real strength. The majority of students go on to take the full A-Level course. They rightly value it for the opportunity it provides to extend their intellectual horizons beyond the bounds of their main courses. Students achieve well in the two advanced certificate in vocational education courses. Each of these courses is equivalent to two A-levels and, overall, students achieve well.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Teachers invest much effort in what they do to help students and this is appreciated by them. The advice, guidance and support provided for students, although satisfactory overall, is not sufficiently refined to help all students achieve to the full extent of their capabilities.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. There is strong commitment to continued improvement and to promoting the best interests of the students. Teaching is carefully monitored and teachers are well supported in improving their expertise. The school shows a strong commitment to ensuring that all students get a fair deal.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the choice of courses offered</li> <li>the teaching challenges them</li> <li>they are helped to study independently</li> <li>teachers are accessible to help them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the advice they are given about how to improve their work</li> <li>the information they are given about their progress</li> <li>the advice they receive about their future options</li> <li>the way the school responds to their views</li> </ul>

The inspection findings confirm the very positive views expressed by the students about the courses offered, the good quality of teaching, the support provided for independent study and the accessibility of the teachers. Inspectors agree that the advice given about how students should improve their work is often not clear enough to be effective. This is also true of the information students receive about their progress. Inspectors concur with the students' view that the advice they receive about the options they follow is not sufficiently focused on individual career choices. Inspectors do not think that the school is not willing to respond to the views of students. The response to the inspection questionnaire for sixth formers and the discussions with them during the inspection indicate clearly the maturity and thoughtfulness that inform students' opinions. Students agreed almost unanimously that they would recommend the sixth form to their friends.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **The overall standards achieved across the school are good**

1. In the 2000 tests for 14-year-olds, students' average point scores in English, mathematics and science were well above average for all schools nationally. In relation to similar schools, students' attainment was well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. These good results come from the commitment of the teachers to high standards and from the good and very good teaching experienced by the students. A further key factor is the commitment of the students to their work and their strong sense of belonging to the school.
2. In 2000, girls did better than boys in English, but to a lesser extent than nationally. In mathematics, boys did slightly better than girls. In science boys did better than girls to a greater extent than nationally. The school uses the analysis of these differences well to inform planning. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is on a rising trend, similar to the national trend. Given the significant changes experienced by the school over recent years this represents good achievement. In the assessments conducted by the teachers of 14 year-olds in design and technology, geography, history, information technology and modern foreign languages good standards are recorded. These good standards are reflected in much of the work seen in the current Year 9. Girls' attainment in design and technology and in history is particularly impressive. In history, girls read more widely than the boys.
3. In 2000, the average points score at GCSE was well above average in relation to all schools and average for similar schools. In relation to schools with similar prior attainment it was also average. Overall boys did better than girls. The proportion of students achieving A\*-C grades was well above average in art and design, English literature, geography, German, history and information technology; above average in combined science, design and technology, drama, English language, physical education; below average in combined design and technology and French and well below average in mathematics.
4. Students taking art and design, English language, English literature, German, history, information technology and sports studies do significantly better in these subjects than in the others they take. Students taking combined science, design and technology, French, geography and mathematics do significantly less well in these subjects than in their other subjects.
5. The average points score of students taking two or more A-levels in 2000 was similar to that of all students nationally. The highest-attaining subjects at A-level in 2000 were sociology, in which results were very high, and English language, history and computer studies, in which they were well above average. Music, with just five entries, and religious studies, with eight entries, were also well above average. The lowest-attaining subjects were economics (as a results of staffing problems, now resolved), which was well below average and mathematics which was below average. Students who took biology, business studies, English literature, English language, sociology, and general studies did significantly better in these subjects than in the other subjects they took. Those who took chemistry, and physics did significantly less well in these subjects than in their other subjects.

6. In lessons and in work seen, standards in art, geography, history and sociology are very good. Many students in these subjects show a high level of skill in the analysis of key concepts. Good standards are reached in the students' work in drama, design and technology, English, French, German, geography, mathematics, physical education and psychology. Standards in biology, business, chemistry and information and communication technology are satisfactory.
7. In general, students achieve well in relation to their levels of attainment on joining the sixth form. Achievement in art, geography, history and sociology is very good. In these subjects students experience progressively more demanding activities and are expected to do well. Students are very quick to acquire a deep knowledge of these subjects. They are fired by the enthusiasm and knowledge of their teachers. Achievement is good in biology, drama, design and technology, English language and English literature, French, German, geography, mathematics, physical education and psychology. In these subjects, too, teaching is informed by a good level of expertise and a commitment to high standards. The school has set and met challenging targets for attainment.

### **The students experience a high proportion of good and very good teaching**

8. The overall quality of teaching is good, with a high proportion of very good teaching and some that is excellent. There has been much effective work on the monitoring of teaching in a way that the teachers have found supportive and helpful. Teachers are very open to change because, as a result of the good in-service training they receive, they have experienced change as a benefit.
9. Teaching across the school is strengthened by the depth and breadth of the teachers' knowledge of what they teach. This is particularly evident in the teaching of French, German, geography, history, English, music, biology, sociology, mathematics, physical education and politics. The students respond by often initiating questions, knowing that they will receive a well-founded answer. The teachers' depth of knowledge ensures that the students are provided with some very effective feedback on their work. Detailed planning that takes proper account of different levels of attainment is another characteristic of the best teaching. Teachers are adept at providing classroom activities that build up progressively and include students of all talents and temperaments.
10. Most teachers demonstrate refined skills in the management of lessons, sensitive to the swings of mood and interest that invade even the best lessons. They are adaptable and imaginative in the way they adjust their lessons to the interests and enthusiasms of the students, who in turn respond to the teachers' delight in their subject. A striking feature of many lessons is the quality of the working relationships that exist between the teachers and the students. There are clear and shared expectations about the conduct of lessons that almost invariably cut through any attempt by the deviant few to set their own agenda. Lessons are mainly disciplined and ordered in a way that sustains a good pace and a stimulating environment for learning.
11. The good quality of questioning marks many lessons. Teachers use questions well to probe for understanding and to give students the opportunity to test their ideas. This is particularly true of the sixth form, where the students' ideas are given free rein. The teachers are good at tightening the rein where appropriate in order to insist on

opinions that are well argued. The encouragement of free and open debate about contested issues strengthens students' convictions and leads them to value the importance of justification and evidence in settling debatable questions. Teachers are skilled at presenting even the most demanding concepts through clear illustrations and explanations.

### **The sixth form is very effective in extending the horizons of its students**

12. The sixth form is a hive of academic work, much of which is of a high order. The commitment to excellence shows itself in all aspects of its work. The school is fortunate in having such a wide range of expertise among the staff, coupled with a long history of very good post-16 provision.
13. Students are offered a stimulating and relevant range of courses that makes it possible for all to build appropriately on their attainment at GCSE. Though guidance is not always good enough, the programmes followed by individual students are carefully monitored to ensure that they form a coherent package. Students are encouraged to broaden their studies through the pursuit of general studies in Year 12, where they have opportunities to engage in political, philosophical and sociological debate about issues that are of deep personal concern and interest to them.
14. At the heart of the sixth form's success is the quality of leadership and management. Particularly impressive is the way the radical reduction in its size was steered. This required the sensitive deployment of many teachers who were accustomed to teaching solely in the sixth form. The funding and resources have been astutely directed to the advantage of the students and every possible source of additional funding has been explored. The school is very effective in managing groups of all sizes.

### **Students' attitudes to the school and to their work are very positive and they behave very well**

15. The students' enthusiasm for their work and their willingness to continue to refine and improve their first efforts is a key factor in the standards achieved. They behave very well in lessons and around the school, not from the constraint of rules but as a matter of principle. They have come to learn that the purpose of lessons is to acquire knowledge, understanding and skill. They appreciate the rightful demands placed upon them by the teachers towards the achievement of this purpose. However, they also value the lightness of touch that often tempers the teachers' serious intentions.
16. The students' interest in doing well and in achieving to the full extent of their competence is very evident in their work. They are good listeners in lessons and engage with gusto in debating issues, soon learning the discipline of supporting assertions with reasons. They show a genuine interest in the topics they pursue and enjoy the cut and thrust of argument. Most students have a very good capacity for sustained work without requiring the constant supervision of the teacher. They work well in groups, or individually in independent work. They make good use of the library and the Internet for independent study.

### **The leadership of the headteacher and the support he is given by the senior staff and governors is very effective in promoting good standards.**

17. The very clear direction given to the work of the school by the headteacher is a key factor in its overall effectiveness. The leadership team is alive with enthusiasm and talent. They deploy their complementary skills to very good effect in supporting key developments. This has been particularly true of the management of the transition from grant-maintained status to that of Foundation School.
18. The considerable skills of the leadership team also came to the fore in steering the school through the difficulties created by the radical reduction of numbers in the sixth form and the consequent expanding roll in the main school. The governors have been closely involved in the recent development of the school. They have kept a keen eye on what was happening, whilst respecting the professionalism of the teachers.
19. Planning for the future development of the school has been creative and imaginative and directed towards getting things done rather than on articulating dreams and hopes. All departments have set out detailed plans about the development of their subjects. This has brought about considerable consistency in practice across the school and the smooth implementation of key policies.
20. A very effective sixth form is sustained by dynamic leadership that nurtures the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers and supports them very well when they experience difficulties. Monitoring of teaching and learning is effectively carried out with a human touch. The costs and benefits of offering each course are carefully calculated, with the result that the sixth form is very cost effective.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Students do not always make enough progress in the development of their skills in information communication technology across the curriculum.**

21. Attainment in information and communication technology is considerably lower than in other subjects. However, the school has done much to bring about improvement in this area over the last few years. The main continuing difficulty arises from weaknesses in the assessment of students and the consequent weakness in the quality of information transferred from year to year. Students do not build progressively on their skills, with the consequence that they often repeat work that has already been covered. There is some good teaching in lessons dedicated to the teaching of information and communication technology skills: for example, a group of Year 10 students were taught effectively to produce a business letter through the good use of a learning program for practising computer skills. However, teaching though satisfactory overall, is reduced in effectiveness by the discontinuities in the students' experience and the weaknesses in overall planning.

### **The use of assessment is not sufficiently refined to support all students in their learning**

22. Though there has been much work in this area and a real commitment to getting it right, there are weaknesses that get in the way of good practice. The results of tests and examinations are used well in planning setting arrangements and other curriculum developments. However, when it comes to the refinements required to identify precisely how well students are doing and how they might best focus their efforts to improve further, much remains to be done.

23. Weaknesses arise from a lack of consistency in the quality of feedback given to students about their attainment and progress. Teachers do not always plan for enough time to work with individual students in order to detect their distinctive barriers to further progress. The students themselves are very keen to improve, but often do not know where to start. Some of the written feedback on work is too general to be helpful. The notion of effort is used too vaguely to communicate anything on which students could get to work. It could be said that too much marking gets done, but not enough that is illuminating.
24. Students tend to settle too readily for their predicted grade rather than seek advice on how they might improve it.

### **The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory**

25. Though standards remain good in art, it is to the credit of the teachers that this remains the case. The accommodation is unsatisfactory in that students work almost exclusively in artificial light. This limits the range of opportunities for exploring light and shade and the impact of natural light.

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

26. In order to maintain the already good standards of attainment and to take the school forward in its development, the governors and staff should:
  - (1) Raise the standards achieved in information and communication technology by:
    - ensuring that all subjects give an adequate range of opportunities to students to apply and extend their skills in information and communication technology;
    - assessing and recording students' progress as they move through the years so that these skills are built up progressively.  
(paragraph 21)
  - (2) Use assessment more effectively to support all students' learning by:
    - creating systems of assessment that teachers find manageable;
    - ensuring that oral and written feedback on students' work is clear enough to help them to improve;
    - helping teachers to manage lessons so that they get more productive access to individual learners in order to make clear to them how well they are doing and how they might improve their work.  
(paragraphs 22-24)

- (3) Improve the accommodation for art by:
- continuing to press for the funding required to bring about the necessary improvements in the accommodation for art.  
(paragraph 25)

### **Sixth Form**

- (1) Improve the quality of support and guidance provided for the students by:
- providing careers guidance that is geared to the particular needs of students, placing greater emphasis on the realistic implications for their careers of the courses they intend to follow;
  - working more closely with individual students in order to make them clearer about how well they are attaining, and about how they could improve their work;
  - ensuring that students do not settle for grades that fall below their capabilities.  
(paragraphs 22, 45)
- (2) Extend the range of opportunities for students to apply their skills in information and communication technology in all subjects.  
(paragraphs 86-89)

*Other matters for the attention of the governors and staff are raised at the beginning of the reports on individual subjects.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	56
	Sixth form	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		52

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	6	17	18	13	1	1	0
Percentage	11	30	32	23	2	2	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	5	22	30	16	0	0	0
Percentage	7	30	41	22	0	0	0

*Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7-11 as each lesson represents 2 percentage points and for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage points.*

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1240	387
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	37	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	186	16

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	16

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	124	124	248

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	107	110	105
	Girls	109	101	94
	Total	216	211	199
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (87)	85 (80)	80 (80)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	63 (59)	68 (59)	48 (38)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	103	108	113
	Girls	107	107	108
	Total	210	215	221
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (85)	87 (89)	89 (84)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	56 (48)	60 (58)	50 (47)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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



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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	118	83	201

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	68	112	115
	Girls	54	76	77
	Total	122	188	192
Percentage of students achieving The standard specified	School	61 (73)	94 (96)	96 (96)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44 (48.5)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	205	254	459

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.5	18.5	16.6	1.7	2.2	2.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	3
	National	N/a

### Ethnic background of students

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of students
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Fixed period	Permanent
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Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	3
Indian	2
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	5
White	1606
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	33	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	1

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	101
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.1

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	532

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.3
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.7
Key Stage 4	21.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	39
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	40
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	4558193
Total expenditure	4473198
Expenditure per pupil	2689
Balance brought forward from previous year	235365
Balance carried forward to next year	320360

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1630
Number of questionnaires returned	390

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	56	9	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	52	6	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	57	14	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	56	17	3	4
The teaching is good.	21	65	6	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	50	14	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	43	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	36	3	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	50	21	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	6	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	52	6	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	45	11	3	6

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were no other issues raised.

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

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

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

27. In the sixth form, the average points achieved by students taking two or more A-levels in 2000 were similar to those attained by all students nationally. A-level results show a rising trend and the most recent unconfirmed results point to a continuation of this trend at the same rate as nationally.
28. The highest-attaining subjects at A-level in 2000 were sociology, where standards were very high and English Language, history and computer studies, which were well above average. Music, with just five entries, and religious studies, with eight entries, were also well above average. The lowest-attaining subjects were economics, which was well below average, and mathematics which was below average. Students who took biology, business studies, English literature, English language, sociology, and general studies did significantly better in these subjects than in the other subjects they took. Those who took chemistry and physics did significantly less well in these subjects than in the others they took. The 2001 unconfirmed results show continued overall improvement in standards.
29. In lessons and in work seen in the sixth form, standards in art, geography, history and sociology are very good, reflecting the standards in the examinations. Many students in these subjects show a high level of skill in the analysis of key concepts. Good standards are reached in the students' work in drama, design and technology, English, French, German, geography, mathematics, physical education and psychology. Standards in biology, business, chemistry and computing are satisfactory. These latter subjects are not as successful as the others as a result of less imaginative teaching, particularly the imprecise assessment of students' attainment and progress.
30. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The development of their skills in information and communication technology, however, is slowed down as good records of attainment are not maintained, with the consequence that students' skills and knowledge do not build up progressively as they move through the school.
31. In general, students in the sixth form make good advances in the development of their knowledge and skills in relation to their levels of attainment on starting their courses. Achievement in art and sociology is very good. Students are very quick to acquire a deep knowledge of these subjects. Achievement is good in biology, business, drama, design and technology, English, French, German, geography, history, physical education and psychology. It is satisfactory in chemistry. Students do not make sufficient advances in their knowledge and skill in information and communication technology. This is mainly as a result of weaknesses in assessment and in recording students' progress. Students occasionally repeat work done in earlier years.

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

32. Overall, students show a positive attitude towards the school in general and to life in the sixth form in particular. They are sufficiently astute, however, to be aware of areas that they believe could be improved, though they feel that they could benefit from more help in improving their work. They do not feel inhibited in expressing their views and when they do so, they are mature and responsible, showing a good capacity for critical analysis. Students listen attentively to their teachers and their response in lessons is generally positive. The great majority of students are highly motivated and well focused on their tasks both in the classroom and elsewhere around the school. They are keen to learn and hence improve their knowledge, understanding and skills at a good rate.
33. Behaviour in the sixth form is very good. Incidents of bullying or of oppressive behaviour are rare. There were no exclusions of sixth-form students in the academic year 2000/2001.
34. Students get on well both with one another and with the staff. There is a good working atmosphere in the sixth form with much team work through which students support each other's learning. Also, many students are becoming effective independent learners. There is a high level of social interaction with good mixing between genders and races. In their free time most sixth-formers help in classes lower down the school. As well as contributing to the education of others this significantly enhances their own personal development. Unfortunately, this practice may have to be reviewed in the near future because of the increased pressures on students' time.
35. The level of attendance of students, in both year groups, is judged to be satisfactory overall and this enables them to make adequate progress with their studies. Tutor group registration takes place at the beginning of the morning session but not in the afternoon. Although informal class registers are marked in each lesson, the school should consider whether or not its procedures are sufficiently robust to ensure that it knows that all students are where they are supposed to be throughout the school day. The incidence of lateness for some students seems rather high. Although this is judged not to be having a serious effect on their learning it is an issue that should be addressed as a matter of personal discipline.

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

36. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Of the lessons seen, one in every 14 was excellent, around one in three very good, with over half good and about one in five satisfactory. Years 12 and 13 are equally well served by the commitment, dedication and wide knowledge of their subjects demonstrated by the teachers. The depth and breadth of the teachers' knowledge is particularly evident in mathematics, biology, physical education, geography, history, politics, sociology, English, French and German. In all subjects, however, the teachers are adept at illuminating the most demanding concepts, with the result that the students feel at ease with challenging ideas. Teachers ensure that students are kept on their toes through the progressive challenge in the questions they ask. Students, in turn come to respect the importance of giving reasons for their answers and of comparing their views with those of others. There are many occasions where teachers take their students beyond the minimum requirements of their courses to challenge them to the

attainment of highest possible grades. The students value the high expectations set for them and respond with the level of commitment to study required to meet these expectations.

37. The quality of teaching varies across subjects. It is very good in physics, economics, art and design, geography, history, sociology and German; good in mathematics, biology, design technology, business studies, business (Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education), psychology, English and French. Teaching is satisfactory overall in computing. The main differences arise from differences in the teachers' breadth and depth of understanding of the subject and the level to which they engage the students' interest and enthusiasm. Tutorial lessons are taught well. The teachers' own enthusiasm for what they teach is another key factor.
38. Teachers are generally very good at relating the students' studies to their lives and interests, thus taking them beyond the immediate practical and particular concerns of the courses they study. Every opportunity is taken to provide students with real life contexts in which to pursue their studies. This is particularly true of work in business studies and in the vocational courses. Teachers make good use of opportunities to develop students competence in handling number and to extend their skills in communication. The teaching of information and communication technology in subjects is less well developed. The teachers help the students to use the library and other resources well in order to support independent study. In this respect homework is used to good effect.
39. Good working relationships lie at the heart of the success of the sixth form. The teachers work hard to ensure that students of all temperaments, tastes and levels of attainment are included in all that is available to support them in their studies. Teachers give generously of their time to support students who suffer a loss of confidence in their capacity to succeed. Students feel that the teachers are always available to help them. Teachers have managed well to treat the students in the sixth form as young adults and to give them a greater sense of responsibility for their own lives. This is combined with the right level of discipline and order to support good standards and positive relationships. In all of this the house system, which continues into the sixth form, is a key factor, creating strong systems of loyalty and healthy competition.
40. Though there was no unsatisfactory teaching in the sixth form, lessons judged to be satisfactory are weakened by a limited use of assessment whereby students can be told precisely how well they are doing, and how they might focus their efforts for improvement. The consequence of this is that occasionally students settle for a predicted grade and do not know how to do better. Lessons are sometimes weakened, too, by teachers missing opportunities to extend students' language through discussion, and allowing them to think for themselves.
41. The students are good learners and, almost without exception, they apply themselves earnestly to their work. The great majority advance in knowledge, understanding and skill at a rate that does justice to their levels of attainment on joining their courses. They take good notes in many lessons, building up their independence and critical engagement with their studies. They make good use of the time allocated for independent study.

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

42. The range of learning opportunities provided is good. The school offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses. A very good range of enrichment opportunities is available both within the taught curriculum and as extra-curricular activities. Students talk enthusiastically, for example, about opportunities for personal expression in art and for lively discussion in politics. In 2000, a team of Year 12 students excelled in the Young Enterprise Scheme by winning a national award for their contribution. Other students lead house lacrosse teams or train house choirs very effectively. The general studies course offers all students access to key skills, and time for discussion and reflection on issues pertinent to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as religious education and citizenship. Good advice is given concerning course choices, although students do not always get sufficient feedback from the careers advisory service to help them in the consideration of their own careers. Students' programmes are carefully planned and monitored to ensure that they build on existing knowledge, skills and understanding. There is strong emphasis on the productive use of private study time and this is planned well.
43. Expectations for information and communication skills, however, are inappropriate for this age group; for example, students cover keyboard skills learned in an earlier age group. Careful thought is given to the phased allocation of study time. The curriculum is structured so as to give all students a fair deal, and it ensures equality of access and opportunity. The pressure of the AS course has led to less time for experimentation and reflection, and this is particularly affecting provision in art.
44. The school makes good use of the learning opportunities provided by the local community. This is particularly true of the vocational courses. There are some productive links with the other sixth forms and further plans are afoot to provide more joint courses in order to extend the range of courses offered.

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

### **Assessment**

45. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good, but those for offering educational and personal support are only satisfactory. Teachers know their students well. They are familiar with examination requirements. In the best practice clearly defined criteria are shared, and students are fully involved in assessment procedures. In these instances, teachers use individual tutorials well to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Most students know how well they are doing. Written work is marked regularly with helpful comments to encourage progress. All faculties have benefited from the knowledge gained by a recent analysis of assessment information. The school has clear information to determine which groups of students are achieving and which are not reaching their potential. Reporting is accurate and gives a clear picture of students' performance. Assessment is not yet refined enough, however, to help students identify where they need to direct their efforts in order to improve, with the consequence that some students settle too easily for their predicted grade.



## **Advice, support and guidance**

46. Overall the advice, support and guidance that the school gives to its sixth-form students is satisfactory. The transition into the sixth form is generally well managed. For example, there are 'specimen' lessons that students can attend to help them choose their options, and a 'welcome' session for them and their parents, and these are effective in enabling students to settle into the new regime of the sixth form. Although there is good provision in general terms of advice and guidance for students on their progression through the sixth form and on to higher education or careers, the delivery of that provision lacks the individual one-to-one touch to make it truly effective. The school should review its procedures to enable students to gain full advantage from the provision available. Students are supported well on personal matters through tutor group system and this is effectively reinforced by the willingness of teachers to make themselves available to talk to students.
47. The school's provision to ensure the health and safety of its students, both in the sixth form and throughout the school, is judged to be good. An effective health and safety committee, comprising teachers, non-teaching staff and a governor, identifies actual and potential hazards through audits and risk assessments and takes appropriate steps to deal with them. There is a well-equipped medical room with the school nurse in attendance to deal with minor injuries and to provide effective support and advice to students on health matters. The school has good procedures in place to deal with more serious accidents. Indeed, one such incident was observed on the sports field during the inspection and the rapid and effective response of the staff was judged to be exemplary.

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

48. Parents are generally strongly supportive of the school and have a particularly high regard for the sixth form, which they believe has a justifiably good reputation. Parents are very satisfied with the high expectations the school has for their children and the progress they make as a consequence. Parents say that they find it easy to approach the school with questions and concerns, and that the school responds well to these. Those with children in the sixth form are impressed by the steps taken by the school to involve parents in the choice of options and the induction process. Parents feel that the quality of the information they receive from the school on their children's progress has recently improved, and that this is supplemented by the feedback they receive from their own children in the sixth form. There is some concern, however, over the timeliness of the information received – for this reason the school should review this aspect of its procedures.
49. The reputation of the sixth form is such that most students in the school aspire to join it when their time comes. Those students already in the sixth form clearly enjoy being there and would readily recommend it to others. In particular they like the choice of courses on offer, the challenge of the teaching, the accessibility of the teachers and the way they are encouraged to study independently. All this is consistent with the positive atmosphere observed in the sixth form during the inspection. Their main concern focuses on aspects of the support and guidance they are given. The inspection revealed that this concern is justified. Some students are also dissatisfied with the range of activities offered. They feel, too, that they are not treated as responsible young adults, and that the school does not respond to the views of the

sixth form. Inspectors do not agree with these concerns. Indeed, they believe that the school does rather well by its students in these areas.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### **Leadership and management**

50. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The school's commitment to providing the students with every opportunity to develop their differing talents is realised to an eminent degree. The drive to include all students and extend them to the full is a striking feature of the many creative initiatives embraced by the school. For instance, there has been much work on extending the students' skills as learners and on helping them to develop independence in their work. What is not so well-managed is the guidance and support offered to the students. It is not always refined enough to indicate to students where their strengths lie and where they might best direct their efforts to bring about further improvement in their work. A great strength of the leadership of the sixth form is the trust placed in the teachers to work in the best interests of all the students. The teachers, in turn, often work well beyond the call of duty.
51. The sixth form is well served by very experienced and appropriately qualified staff. The teachers are deployed across the school in a way that serves the interests of both the sixth form and the main school. Their high level of specialist expertise is a real strength. The promotion of high standards is ensured by the quality of support provided to teachers in extending their own knowledge and skills. The governors have been closely involved in the development of the sixth form, particularly during the last few years when the numbers have been drastically reduced as a result of the establishment of other providers of post-16 education. They have had a crucial role, too, in managing the transition from grant-maintained status to that of Foundation School. They work closely with the headteacher and the head of the sixth form in monitoring the quality of what is offered to the students and in taking care that attention to the sixth form does not lead to neglect of the needs of the rest of the school
52. The head of the sixth form and his senior colleagues work well together in gathering information, on the students' performance, that forms a secure basis for comparing what it offers with what is provided by other institutions. Links with the other sixth forms are managed carefully. The school is ready to embrace change that serves the interests of efficiency and the drive towards raising standards of attainment. Astute financial planning and the monitoring of costs and benefits of offering different courses have ensured that the sixth form is very cost effective.

### **Accommodation and resources**

53. There is a very good range of learning resources, including a well-stocked library, which is used well. There is a good range of resources for supporting the students' skills in the use and application of information and communication technology, but these resources are not used well. However, many students take the initiative to make good use of the Internet. Accommodation is adequate overall. The accommodation for art is unsatisfactory in that working conditions are cramped, students are constrained to work constantly under artificial lighting, and there is a shortage of suitable display and storage space, especially for three-dimensional work.

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

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

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

**GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	12	83	63	-	17	0.9	1.56
Business Studies	1	100	78	-	16	3.0	1.9
General Studies	244	77	72	13	18	1.9	1.9
Geography	1	100	70	-	15	1.0	1.6
Religious Studies	1	100	76	-	19	3.0	2.0
Other Social Sciences	2	-	70	-	18	-	1.7
French	1	100	78	-	17	2.0	1.8
Spanish	1	-	73	-	17	-	1.8

**GCE A-level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	76	76	89	30	45	5.0	6.0
Chemistry	37	81	89	27	42	4.8	5.9
Biology	45	87	88	31	34	4.7	5.3
Physics	34	74	88	29	41	4.3	5.7
Full design and Technology	22	95	92	14	29	4.7	5.4
Home Economics	15	93	81	33	24	5.6	4.6
Business Studies	25	100	91	20	30	5.2	5.3
Economics	9	78	88	11	36	3.8	5.4
Business (Post Vocational)	16	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	9.0	10.8
Computer Studies	28	86	85	50	23	6.1	4.6
Sports/PE Studies	10	100	91	20	25	5.2	5.0

Art and Design	44	98	96	55	45	7.1	6.4
Music	5	100	93	60	35	7.6	5.7
Classical Studies	7	100	94	29	46	6.3	6.4
Geography	23	96	92	43	37	6.1	5.7
History	34	97	89	41	34	6.8	5.4
Religious Studies	8	100	91	38	35	6.8	5.6
Sociology	12	100	88	75	37	8.7	5.5
Other Social Studies	29	93	88	45	35	6.1	5.3
English Literature	55	98	96	42	36	6.3	5.9
English Language	40	100	92	43	31	6.6	5.4
French	13	92	91	38	39	6.2	5.7
German	9	89	92	44	41	5.6	5.9
Other Languages	1	100	94	-	59	6.0	7.1
General Studies	1	100	85	100	28	8.0	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

54. The inspection focused on mathematics at AS Level and at A-level, where standards are good. Biology and chemistry were inspected in detail: good standards are achieved in biology and in physics, which was sampled. Standards in chemistry are satisfactory.

#### Mathematics

The quality of provision is good.

#### Strengths:

A-level results have improved this year and are above last year's national averages

The standard of work produced in lessons is above average

Teaching is good and students work diligently

Excellent relationships contribute to effective learning in lessons

#### Areas for improvement:

The introduction of minimum standards for entry to AS and A-level courses that ensure that students have sufficient background knowledge to complete the courses successfully

### Standards and achievement

55. Over recent years the number of students following an A-level mathematics course has been high and well above the numbers doing other subjects. The school's open access policy has led to a wide variation in attainment levels among students starting the course. This has been more evident in some years than in others and examination results have fluctuated accordingly. For example, in the Year 2000 the proportion achieving A-B grades was well below the national average and about one-

quarter of students failed to obtain an A-E grade. In the Year 2001, however, results for both A-B and A-E grades were much better. However, for Year 12 students the indications from the unconfirmed AS results for 2001 are that standards are poor, with more than half of all students not achieving a pass grade. This has resulted in many students not continuing with the A-level mathematics course. The take-up of mathematics is lower for girls than for boys, but their results overall are similar.

56. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is above the national average. All students have good algebraic skills which they use confidently when introduced to a new topic. For example in Year 12 they had little difficulty in finding the equations of straight lines with given intercepts and gradients. In Year 13 students' good earlier grounding in mechanics enabled them to find the centre of mass of a system of particles. An additional strength is the clear way in which solutions are presented in well-kept files.

### **Quality of education**

57. Teaching is good and occasionally very good. Lessons are well planned at an appropriate level to promote students' learning. Teachers have a very good understanding of mathematics and how to teach it effectively. This results in high levels of motivation in students who are determined to understand what they are doing. There is a good balance of class teaching and independent learning in most lessons. This produces a lively pace, sustains students' interest, and enables them to learn more effectively. Occasionally, if teachers talk for too long, attention flags and learning diminishes. Learning is often enhanced where students work collaboratively to resolve problems. They showed this in a Year 13 lesson where students helped each other to solve equations in trigonometry. Teachers mark work regularly. This assists students to resolve problems and move on confidently to new work. Homework is set regularly and is effective in promoting learning.

### **Leadership and management**

58. The faculty is well led and managed. The new head of faculty has settled down well and there is a positive ethos for learning. Good relationships have been developed with staff and all are committed to raising standards. Appropriate arrangements for the monitoring of teaching are in place and provide good support for staff. The department makes good use of target-setting to assist students to improve their grades. There are good quality books and resources to support learning.

### **Biology**

Overall, provision in biology is good.

#### **Strengths:**

The standards achieved by all students are good

Teaching is good

Students have a very positive attitude to biology

#### **Areas for improvement:**

The curriculum does not include enough information and communication technology.

### **Standards and achievement**

59. The 2000 A-level results were average. Biology results were lower than in most other subjects in the school. Over the past four years A-level results have remained static. Girls' results have been better than boys'. The unconfirmed AS results for 2001 were a little below the average for other subjects in the school.
60. Achievement is good. Overall, students achieve higher grades at A-level and AS-level than would be expected from their GCSE results. This is very marked for high-attaining students in A-level human biology and AS-level biology. The quality of students' work seen in lessons and in their folders confirms this. Folders are very well organised, with topics clearly separated and important concepts highlighted: this greatly aids learning and revision. Students' achievement in higher-order learning skills is generally good. For example, students' independent research during the field study week at Aberystwyth is good, and their results are used effectively in lessons as primary evidence when they return to school. By contrast, students' information and communication technology skills are weak.

### **Quality of education**

61. Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Three-quarters of the lessons were good or very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and is used to good effect to accelerate students' acquisition of facts and concepts. Debates led by the teacher are a feature of lessons, and challenging questions maintain students' interest and concentration. Because the questions are directed at individuals all students are involved in productive learning. Lessons move at a good pace ensuring that learning is productive. Practical lessons are well managed and are enjoyed by students. Experiments support and reinforce students' theoretical understanding. For example, a class beginning a study of genetics was making good progress in learning to determine the sex of *Drosophila* flies in advance of breeding experiments. The best lessons end with a review of what has been achieved, positively reinforcing students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers' plans do not include enough opportunities for students to use computers. Marking of homework is very thorough. Inaccuracies are clearly corrected, but the marked work does not always show clear targets for improvement.
62. Students' attitudes to biology are very good. They enjoy the subject and feel confident. They report that teachers are accessible if they need help. They persevere with their work even when they are confronted by demanding concepts. They work well independently and make good use of their study time.

### **Leadership and management**

63. The subject is well led and managed. Staffing and resources are good. Well-qualified technicians support learning effectively. Accommodation is cramped for some practical work. The curriculum does not include enough information and communication technology to develop fully students' higher learning skills. Assessment of students' work is regular and, because the assessment is communicated to students as GCE grades, students and teachers are able to track progress easily. Analysis of examination results has produced a precise action plan that lists deadlines, responsibilities and a monitoring programme. Improvement in biology since the last inspection has been good.

### **Chemistry**

Overall, provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

**Strengths:**

The standards achieved by high-attaining students are good

Teachers are very well qualified, which improves the quality of students' learning

Students have very positive attitudes to chemistry

**Areas for improvement:**

Overall, average students do not achieve as highly as they should

The curriculum does not include enough information and communication technology, or sufficient long investigations to strengthen students' higher learning skills

**Standards and achievement**

64. The 2000 A-level results were average in national terms. The results are below the average for other A-level subjects in the school. The 2001 results are an improvement on the previous year. Over the last four years the results have been variable with no clear trend. Boys' and girls' results have also varied from year to year, again with no clear trend. The unconfirmed AS results for 2001 were a little below the average for other subjects in the school.
65. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Students with very good GCSE grades achieve well and obtain A and B grades at A-level and in AS examinations. Overall, students with average GCSE grades do not achieve as well as they should. The grades they obtain at A-level and AS level are below those predicted. The quality of students' work seen in lessons and in their folders confirms this. Folders of high-attaining students are very well organised, with topics separated and important concepts highlighted, which greatly aids learning and revision. In contrast, the folders of lower-attaining students are not well sequenced: too much work is left unchecked by teachers and this militates against easy revision. Students' achievement in numeracy and problem solving is good, but their information and communication technology and independent learning skills are under developed.

**Quality of education**

66. Teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The teachers' subject knowledge is very secure: this is used to good effect to accelerate students' acquisition of facts and concepts. Lively teacher-led debates are a feature of lessons. Challenging questions maintain students' interest and concentration. Lessons move at a good pace ensuring that learning is productive. Practical lessons are well managed and are enjoyed by students. Experiments support and reinforce well students' theoretical understanding of chemistry. For example, a class beginning their study of molecular chemistry was challenged effectively by an experiment to find the thickness of one molecule of Oleic Acid. However, teachers' plans do not include enough opportunities for students to discuss work among themselves or to work independently. Marking of homework is very thorough with inaccuracies clearly corrected, but the marked work does not always show clear targets for improvement.
67. Students' attitudes to chemistry are very good. They enjoy the subject and feel confident. They report that teachers are accessible if they need help.

**Leadership and management**

68. This is satisfactory. Staffing and resources are good. Learning is well supported by well-qualified technicians. Accommodation is cramped for some practical work. The curriculum does not include sufficient use of computers to develop students' higher learning skills. Assessment of students' work is regular, but results are given to students as marks, not as GCE grades, and this makes tracking of progress difficult. Examination results have been analysed but the action plan is not precise enough because it does not list deadlines, who is responsible for implementation or how it is to be monitored. Progress has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

### **Engineering, design and manufacturing**

69. The inspection focused on design and technology where standards varied from above average in food and textiles and average in resistant materials and graphics.

### **Design and technology**

Overall, provision is good

#### **Strengths:**

Teaching, learning and achievement in food technology

Teaching, learning and achievement in textiles technology

Standards gained in food and textiles technology at AS and A2 levels

#### **Areas for improvement:**

Teaching, learning and achievement in resistant materials and graphics

Standards gained in resistant materials and graphics at AS and A2 levels

### **Standards and achievement**

70. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were average. The unconfirmed 2001 results point to an improvement over previous years. Not all students who took the examination gained a pass grade. The proportion gaining the higher grades was above average. Girls outperformed boys. In relation to their GCSE grades the higher-attainers did as expected although a number of students did less well.
71. The standards of work of current students are above average in food and textiles but average in resistant materials and graphics. In Year 13 the majority of students are doing well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results but a minority are not. In the best lessons students have very good existing knowledge, understanding and skill development based on previous learning and achievement in the area studied. As textile designers or as food nutritionists they are achieving well. Where students have not got these firm foundations, because of missing elements in earlier studies, learning is slow and standards are below what might be expected. This is particularly evident in resistant materials. In one lesson students clearly lacked the knowledge base to think creatively about the media and processes being considered. In another lesson poor study habits slowed progress. Higher-order thinking skills were less evident than might be expected. Whereas higher-attaining students actively interrogate the notes offered to them, lower-attaining pupils copy notes compliantly with few offering comments or asking for clarification. In these cases spelling is not always secure.
72. Students in Year 12 are only just starting their course, but are achieving much as expected. They show good knowledge and understanding of the techniques that they are learning in graphics. Students in textiles are excited by the possibilities open



to them and link experiences in art with those in textiles. Students in food disassemble products, plan and distribute questionnaires and evaluate results before designing their own dishes.

### **Quality of education**

73. Teaching is always satisfactory and in three-fifths of lessons good and occasionally excellent. The best teaching responds well to all students' needs, with planning focused not only to cover examination criteria but also to stimulate higher order learning skills. Humour and enthusiasm for what is being taught are good features. Students are encouraged to act and behave like responsible partners in learning and generally do as expected. This happened in one food technology lesson where both the teacher and students worked closely together to develop food products for specific purposes. Where teaching has weaknesses, students are not sufficiently involved or interested and teachers lack strategies to overcome the students' inertia.
74. Written work seen in major projects is usually of a high standard. The best AS projects use information and communication technology well for research, graphics and the display of data. Students' numeracy skills are adequate for the tasks undertaken when weighing, estimating, calculating or measuring accurately. Work is marked frequently with helpful written comments.
75. The majority of students are attentive, work speedily and respond well to the advice given by their teachers. Students support one another well in the kitchens and when using computers. Independent research, using computers, is a strong feature in food technology and textiles. A team made up of present Year 13 students, as Year 12, won a national competition by setting up a company, manufacturing and marketing a toy.

### **Leadership and management**

76. The subject is well led. Recent changes in leadership and management have brought about better systems for monitoring and moderating teaching, learning and assessment. A sound development plan is in place. Computer facilities are greatly improved. A newly appointed teacher brings much needed expertise in delivering and applying computer-aided design facilities. The faculty works hard to address the imbalance in standards that currently exists between food and textiles, and resistant materials and graphics.

### **Business**

77. The main focus of the inspection was business studies taught as an A-Level subject and the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in Business. Results at A-level are average, whilst the vocational course shows very good results. Economics, where standards are good, was also sampled.

## Business education

Overall, the quality of provision is good

### **Strengths:**

The GNVQ results in 2001 were of a high standard. Four students took the course, and all passed, three with distinctions and the other with a merit

Teaching overall is good. Lessons are carefully prepared

The department is well managed

### **Areas for improvement:**

The standards demonstrated by current Year 13 are lower than they should be

Teaching is not monitored well enough

78. Over the last four years the examination results in A-level business studies have remained steadily in line with national averages, except in 1999 when results were above average. Girls have out-performed boys in all years, but not significantly more so than nationally, except in 1998. In the unconfirmed results for 2001 standards at AS level in both business studies and the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in Business fell. There is no clear reason why this should have been the case.
79. The standards reached by current Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are below average. In A-level business studies, the six boys following the course have a basic knowledge and understanding of the topics they have covered, for example, marketing. Research skills are satisfactory. Students use information and communication technology effectively, for instance in drawing and interpreting graphs to show forecast break-even points for business. However, the students' analytical skills, which are essential for reaching the higher grades, are weaker than they should be. Overall, students have not made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at GCSE. On the advanced vocational course in Year 13 students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the business environment in which competitive business operates, but they need a lot of help in applying their understanding. Whilst description and presentation of data are generally at least satisfactory, there is a limited amount of extended analysis and critical evaluation. Good use is made of information and communication technology. Students have learned to work effectively in teams. In Year 12, students on both courses have made a good beginning and are attaining appropriately.

## Quality of education

80. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers on the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in Business course are knowledgeable and well organised, and they plan their lessons to accommodate the students' needs. Lessons have a practical, commercial focus, based on a good range of resources including material from local industry contacts. Teachers' planning, delivery, assessment and feedback to students are thorough. Individual students feel well supported and their progress is well monitored. Teaching on the business studies course is also well planned and has clear objectives that are shared with students. Students' work is assessed on a regular basis with some helpful comments, but not enough is done to indicate how students might improve. Current teaching strategies are not succeeding with Year 13 students, who are failing to apply concepts to the outside business community through independent research.

81. Students generally approach lessons in the advanced vocational course with enthusiasm and interest and are well motivated to learn. They enjoy working co-operatively in small groups, and they work independently on computers. Students demonstrate research skills in a variety of contexts, including the use of the Internet. Of the nine students who began the course in Autumn 2000, six remain, and one has decided to repeat Year 12. Interest in the course has increased and the Year 12 AS course is full. Business studies students show a positive attitude to their lessons. They enjoy the subject, listen attentively in lessons and relationships are good. Year 12 students have very good attitudes to their learning.

### **Leadership and management**

82. The department is well led and managed. Documentation is detailed and clear and schemes of work have been revised and developed appropriately for the new courses. Teaching is not monitored enough.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

83. The focus of the inspection was the A-level course in computing where standards have been good but have fallen in recent years and the Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in information communication technology, where standards in 2000 were below average.

### **Computing and Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education in Information and communication technology**

84. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory.

#### **Strengths:**

Teachers' have a good knowledge of their subject and plan thoroughly

Students' have good attitudes to their work and behave well

The computing network and modern computer facilities provide a very good resource for learning

#### **Areas for improvement**

The curriculum is not managed well enough to ensure that students develop their skills progressively

### **Standards and achievement**

85. The standards achieved at the age of 18 in the use and application of information and communication technology across the curriculum are variable. Students enter the sixth form with different standards of prior attainment and not all courses cater fully for their needs: nearly one-half of students enter without having studied information and communication technology between the ages of 14 and 16 years.
86. The standard achieved in the A-level in computing in 2000 was well above the national average. The provisional results for 2001 point to below average standards. Standards had been well above the national average in the previous two years. Very few girls take either the AS- or A-level in computing, but those who do achieve as well as the boys. The smaller number of students in the recently introduced AS and advanced vocational certificate course in information and communication technology achieved well below the national average in the AS-level examinations. The

provisional results for 2001 show that only one in seven students achieved grade C. The overall standard of attainment in the lessons seen was satisfactory.

87. The school introduced two worthwhile additional courses this year. All students now take a key skills course of seven lessons as a part of the general studies programme in Year 12. However, attainment in the lesson seen was unsatisfactory because insufficient account was taken of the wide range of prior attainment. No workable arrangements have been made for students to develop their portfolios, and hence it is not expected that many students will complete the course this year. A significant group of students now take the General National Vocational Qualification (Part One) course in information and communication technology at intermediate level. The number entering the course has been restricted this year because of a lack of suitable accommodation and teachers. In addition to specialist courses, students successfully apply computing in courses in art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, physical education and science. In most other subjects, however, not enough use is made of the available resources to extend students' skills in information and communication technology.
88. In the A-level courses in computing students successfully learn about computer networks, programming, hardware and software applications, and practical systems development. Students are only in the early stages of the second year, but they have a good knowledge of iteration, selection and looped programs for counting. They have also learnt to write programs to calculate employees' gross pay, tax and net pay. In the advanced vocational course students have gained a good knowledge of mass storage devices, how to complete their mini-project and what is required to gain good grades. In the first few weeks of the key skills course students learn to use spreadsheets and to enter, select and alter information. In the advanced vocational course in business, students extensively apply computing to research topics using the Internet; they present and analyse data using spreadsheets and databases; and they improve presentation by using desktop publishing. In other courses, students learn to use computers to research topics; to aid design and improve the presentation of their work in design and technology; to import photographs using the Internet in geography; and to use digital images to analyse movement in physical education.

### **Quality of education**

89. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory: it is good in two out of five lessons. The principle features of good teaching are effective planning by teachers, based on a secure knowledge of the subject, good guidance and encouragement to individual students, good pace, and appropriate use of question and answer sessions to motivate students. Less successful teaching results from teachers launching into applications before giving adequate explanations or demonstrations of the work. This also leads to the provision of work that is not matched to the students' prior attainment. For example, in the key skills lesson seen, a significant number of students were repeating work on spreadsheets they had done before. The assessment of students' work in information technology is generally unsatisfactory.

## Leadership and management

90. Overall the management is satisfactory but has weaknesses. Co-ordination in the sixth form has become more complex and problematic with courses now being run by different faculties. As a consequence, the aims and co-ordination of the sixth form curriculum are not clear. Since the last inspection the school has installed a new and extensive Research Machines network. Whilst the overall ratio of students to terminals in the school is equal to the national average, terminals are spread across many rooms. This has meant that the potentially large vocational course has had an unnecessary restriction placed on its intake because there are too few teachers to cover the many classes the accommodation and distribution of terminals dictate.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

91. The focus of the inspection was physical education AS-level, A-level, GCSE in Year 12, and the optional programme of activities available in the sixth form. Students achieved average grades in the 2000 A-level examination.

### Physical education

The overall quality of provision in physical education is good.

#### Strengths:

The students' achievement in AS and A-level examinations is good in relation to their attainment on joining the courses

Students' personal exercise programmes (produced for AS-level) show effective application of a range of theoretical principles to physical performance

Students demonstrate a high level of personal performance in their chosen physical activities

#### Areas for improvement:

The objectives of lessons are not always clearly stated and related directly to what is to be achieved

The range of activities to stimulate more confident use of technical language is narrow

The number of recreational and individual activities in the core sixth form programme is limited

92. In 2000 the A-level results were average. Students achieved grades similar to those in their other subjects. A few achieved higher grades than predicted.
93. The students currently in Year 13 produce good work and achieve satisfactorily relative to their attainment on joining the course. A few students work at standards above A-level. Particular strengths are the students' ability to link personal performance with theoretical aspects. This is evident in their physical exercise programmes submitted as AS-level course work. Many programmes seen included extremely detailed work, with accurate use of technical vocabulary and an excellent grasp of principles, intelligently interpreted in relation to their chosen activities. Their notes show that many are confident in their use of number. They understand and apply various physiological formulae and are able to relate them to performance. They have a good grasp of technical vocabulary, but are less confident in using it when speaking. This is evident in class discussions, as seen in a debate about 'deviance' in sport where the argument of many students lacked depth and length.

There is effective use by the students of information and communication technology equipment, such as video to record performance and assist in skill analysis.

94. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to the AS-level course and are achieving well in relation to course requirements. They have good background knowledge from GCSE and their writing shows a good understanding of the work covered so far. In particular, they have a good appreciation of how various fitness tests can be related to improving their own personal performance. They show good levels of fitness both in tests and in their chosen activities. The standard of note-taking varies between students. The highest-attaining students show evidence of independent research, whilst others have notes that are sometimes incomplete and occasionally missing.
95. The few students who study GCSE in Year 12 have above average depth of knowledge and are achieving well relative to course requirements. They have a good recall of facts.
96. Overall, the teaching and its impact on the students' learning are good. The most effective teaching involves very high expectations and a good range of tasks that stimulate a variety of responses from the students. All the teachers have very good knowledge of their subject resulting in stimulating lessons that motivate the students, firing their interest. An example of this was seen in a lesson during which students had to relate their personal experience of either their own "stretching of the rules" or their feelings as a recipient. This, combined with thought-provoking questions from the teacher and the reading of a confession by a famous sportsman resulted in the students gaining a far greater understanding of positive and negative deviance in sport. Overall, however, too few teaching strategies are used to extend the students' use of technical vocabulary. In the most effective lesson the objectives were clearly mapped out and resulted in positive learning by the students. Marking of homework assignments is not always constructive, and notes are not checked for completeness or quality.
97. The students respond well to all aspects of examination work. Those who opt to take part in the sixth form programme of games are well motivated and reach high standards in school, county and national teams in sports such as rugby, hockey and lacrosse. They use advanced strategies and tactics and practise in order to refine their skills. Their level of fitness is good. However the programme does not offer sufficient opportunities for students to take part in more recreational and individual activities. Mutual respect between the teachers and the students creates an effective and supportive learning environment. Students work well in small groups and teams. The teachers demand a high level of independence from the students, and this results in their having a mature and diligent approach to work.
98. All courses are well managed and there is a team determination to improve further the teaching and the standards achieved. A careful analysis of examination results has led to changes in teaching techniques. The students see the introduction of individual tutorials to support and set targets as positive and helpful. The new theory classroom is having a positive impact, but requires blinds and more plugs for effective and safe use of electrical resources. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which contributes very effectively to the students' skills and social awareness.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

99. The focus on the inspection was on the art and design A-level course, where standards are high, and theatre studies where standards were below average in 2000, whilst standards observed in lessons were good.

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision is excellent

#### **Strengths:**

Examination results are very high

The quality of teaching is very good. Careful planning helps to ensure that all students learn effectively

The tutorial system is very effective, and good assessment procedures underpin all aspects of students' work

The leadership and management of the subject are outstanding

#### **Areas for improvement:**

Accommodation is too confined for large teaching groups

Students work solely in artificial light: this limits their experience of working with light

Insufficient space is available for safe storage and displays of three-dimensional work

### **Standards and achievement**

100. Results in the 2000 A-level examination were above average. The unconfirmed results for 2001 were very high compared with the national average. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is well above average. Students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their previous GCSE and AS-level results. This good progress is the result of very good teaching across the department. All students work independently when researching topics and show a wide range of chosen interests. For example, posing the question 'what elements make for a harmonious and balanced composition?' one student traced ideas from ancient Greek and Roman culture, through the Italian Renaissance, finally analysing the more contemporary works of Piet Mondrian. In order to inform her own practical work, she made copious notes, sketches and pastiche studies of 'ithmetic Composition' by Van Doesburg to discover the mathematical formula used to convey a sense of movement and perspective. This enquiry effectively linked the student's own interests in mathematics, architecture and art and design. To extend the study, she compared the use these artists made of geometrical features in expressing aspects of mood and emotion. She then embarked on her final piece of work. Students in Year 12, having only recently joined the course, make good progress and generate a prolific amount of good quality practical work in a short time. For example, over two consecutive printmaking sessions, each student compiled a rich and varied visual bank of 100 sample pieces of practical work. These they carefully analysed during discussions with peers and teachers, selecting, annotating and mounting the best to be used as exemplars of suitable techniques. They then incorporated the results into their own major piece of coursework.

## Quality of education

101. The teaching is consistently very good, with some outstanding features. It is the major contributor to the high quality of learning throughout the department. The key features of the teaching are the high levels of specialist subject knowledge and practical skills. This is evident when teachers work by demonstration, and have a strong impact on students, enabling them to make instant comparisons between theoretical ideas and practice. This approach, combined with clearly expressed high expectations, helps students to know what is required of them at all times. Teachers are good at sharing their specialist expertise, for example in ceramics, painting and printmaking. They do this through demonstration or team teaching. The department is open during lunchtimes and after school, and many students use the extra time to catch up or join the good range of clubs (photography, ceramics and two-dimensional pursuits) on offer.
102. All teachers use searching questioning techniques to evaluate students' retention of knowledge from one session to the next. There are very rigorous procedures for the assessment of students' work. Without exception, all students spoken to talked intelligently about their progress, know how far they have improved since their last tutorial and what they need to do to achieve their expected or desired grades. Assessment performance tables are openly displayed in the department, promoting a healthy spirit of competition and providing regular updated information to encourage progress. A computer program, tailored to the needs of the subject and used to provide 'structure' during tutorials, helps to ensure parity of experience. It also encourages students to participate fully in the critical evaluation of their work and in negotiating new targets for improvement. Teachers take every opportunity to celebrate good work by mounting displays around the school. This enriches the working environment.
103. Students collaborate well in their own learning. They show respect to one another and respond well to the teachers' encouragement. All have developed confidence in their research capabilities, and most go beyond the superficial first layers of the issues they choose to study. Despite the constant pressures of coursework deadlines, students admit to deriving much satisfaction and enjoyment from their studies.
104. Students use information and communication technology well - in the computer suites, the library and within the department - for research and, where appropriate, to generate imagery. They benefit from the many useful visits led by the teachers to galleries and museums. These are timed to make maximum impact on students prior to relevant units in the coursework.
105. Leadership and management of the subject are outstanding. The subject leader has detailed knowledge of all the students and their stages of development. His inclusive approach ensures that all teachers co-operate in planning, and that assessment information is shared appropriately, resulting in all staff having thorough knowledge of the needs of each student. A good working atmosphere of professional camaraderie has been developed. As a result, students more readily test out and share their emerging personal philosophies, in the knowledge they will be listened to and encouraged.



106. Working conditions in the department are cramped. There is insufficient daylight in some areas, causing students to work constantly under artificial lighting. There is a shortage of suitable display and storage space, especially for three-dimensional work. This restricts the extent to which students benefit from one another's work and ideas. Resources for practical work are of good quality and make a positive contribution to the standards of work produced. The reference books in the department are particularly well chosen, especially those featuring contemporary artists.

## **THEATRE STUDIES**

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is good

### **Strengths:**

Good teaching enables students to develop their knowledge of theatre practitioners and to apply this knowledge to their own work

The enthusiasm of the teachers for their work makes a positive impact on the commitment students bring to their work

### **Areas for improvement:**

The quality of planning in the sixth form does not match that in the main school

## **Standards and achievement**

107. A-level results in 2000 were below the national average for A and B grades. The school was in line with national averages for A - C grades. Standards in A-level examinations have declined over the last few years. Virtually all students arrive in Year 12 with a good range of drama skills and strategies. This is reflected in the above-average GCSE drama examination results. Students utilise and build on these skills as they go through the two years of the A-level course. Students study the philosophies and techniques of accepted theatre practitioners, such as Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht, and utilise what they have learned in their own workshops and rehearsals. Students achieve well in relation to their prior learning and make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
108. Standards in lessons and in work seen are good. Although only involved in theatre studies for a number of weeks, students in the single Year 12 lesson observed demonstrated that they had already developed an understanding of the stylistic features of Restoration comedy, and its emphasis on the exaggerated acting style demanded by Edwards Bonds' play 'Restoration'. Through good use of movement, gestures, and the creation of appropriate voice and dialect, students could be seen to be developing a sound understanding of the use of physical and vocal styles in order to denote class differences in the play. Through good rehearsal techniques the students come to appreciate the shape of the scene, the importance of pace, tempo and individual climaxes in the play. Students engage in good collaborative learning, they listen to and appreciate one another's opinions, approach scenes from a number of different points of view, and finally arriving at an agreed interpretation.
109. Students in Year 13 demonstrate a sound knowledge of the social and cultural context of Timberlake Wertenburger's 'Our Country's Good', a play set in eighteenth century Australia. Through their good practical knowledge, students display an effective understanding of how to translate a piece of drama from page to stage and consider its potential impact on an audience. Students work hard at creating believable and recognisable characters, through appropriate body language, movement, vocal qualities, and the use of space to indicate relationships. Although

the students were in the early stages of rehearsal at the time of the inspection, a number of them created and sustained a believable character.

110. The students' good understanding of the characters they create was shown to very good effect in a highly-charged workshop that combined both forum theatre and Brechtian techniques. In this work, they showed a good understanding of the central ideas of the play, on the theme of nature versus nurture. During this activity many students displayed good acting skills as they responded in character to the ideas and arguments presented by each side. Students did particularly well in view of the fact that many of the girls were playing male characters.

### **Quality of teaching**

111. The teaching of A-level theatre studies is good and often very good. The head of department, the only member of staff observed in the sixth form, has a thorough knowledge of his subject and conveys it to students in a meaningful and dramatic manner. He has high expectations of all students and presents them with a challenging range of drama activities. Students are given the opportunity to take control of their own learning, to experiment with a number of drama techniques and strategies, based upon the ideas of a number of theatre practitioners. Regular opportunities are provided for students to view their own and other students' work on video tape, and to discuss how it can be improved. Students' responses during these activities display a clear understanding of how to learn, and how work can be improved over time. The head of department makes good use of his own talents and skills in offering alternative suggestions and interpretations of individual lines and scenes to students, without inhibiting their creativity through over-direction. The real enthusiasm he displays for the work is a significant factor in the creation of an animated, rigorous, sometimes highly charged environment in which good and very good learning takes place. Students, without exception, display real enthusiasm for their drama classes. They work with interest, sustained concentration, and often sheer pleasure, as they engage in a range of demanding work. Good working relationships exist between students and all the teachers in the department.

### **Leadership and Management**

112. The subject is led by an enthusiastic and well-informed subject co-ordinator, who leads by the example of his own good practice. There are good working relationships between all members of staff. The current planning documentation does not fully carry through into the sixth form. There are regular opportunities for students to utilise their skills and talents in a range of studio and full-scale productions. These are much appreciated by students, parents and the school community. The subject is supported by a generous level of relevant resources and is taught in good accommodation.

### **HUMANITIES**

113. The inspection focused on geography and history where A-level results have been well above average; sociology where students reach very high standards; and psychology where standards are good. Politics and philosophy, where students engage with demanding concepts to a high level, were sampled.

### **Geography**

Overall, the quality of provision is very good

**Strengths:**

Standards on the A-level course are well above average

Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment

Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and lessons are planned carefully to challenge students

The subject is well managed

**Areas for improvement:**

Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently

Students are not sufficiently supported in their individual learning

**Attainment and achievement**

114. The A-level results in 2000 were above average. The unconfirmed A-level results for 2001 show improvement over the 2000 results. There has been a rising trend over the past few years. In 1998 and 1999 students performed better in geography than they did in other subjects. Girls have outperformed boys in the past four years, in 1998 and 1999 by more than girls did nationally. Twenty-six students embarked on the AS course in Autumn 2000. Twenty-four entered for the exam, and 20 attained a pass grade; 10 achieved an A or B grade. Of the four students who failed to obtain a grade, two were poor attenders. Most students show good achievement in relation to their prior attainment.

115. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm that standards are well above average and achievement is good. In the Year 12 course, students have made a good beginning to their course showing a good knowledge of introductory topics in physical and human geography. They write fluently using appropriate geographical terms. In the upper sixth, students have a comprehensive in-depth knowledge of aspects of physical geography as was demonstrated in a lesson on the study of the coastline around Flamborough Head. Their map work is very good. They show good understanding by appropriately displaying their knowledge in extended essay writing, using diagrams or sketch maps to good effect to illustrate their work. They show a good level of skill in interpreting a range of sources and geographical information. They collect evidence from primary or secondary data and use an appropriate range of skills and techniques to analyse it. Fieldwork assignments are of a high standard.

**Quality of education**

116. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn well as a result. Very good subject knowledge and expertise are used to motivate and inform students. Lessons are well planned, using good quality resources, with clear learning objectives shared with students. Teachers use every opportunity to reinforce geographical skills and build on earlier learning. Time is used productively and lessons proceed at a challenging pace ensuring that students are fully involved in their own learning. Probing questioning ensures good quality discussion though teachers do not always involve all students equally. Homework assignments are regularly marked and students are given clear judgements on the quality of their work with helpful guidance on how to improve.

117. Students are well motivated and attentive. They are independent learners and are confident in using books and information and communication technology. They make

good advances in both learning and thinking. However, although there is evidence to show some use of the Internet for individual research, information and communication technology is not used sufficiently by students. There are insufficient planned opportunities for applying and developing the students' skills in this area.

### **Leadership and management**

118. The good achievement and very good teaching can be attributed to the fact that the subject is well managed by an experienced head of department assisted by a hardworking team of teachers. A considerable amount of curriculum development has taken place to ensure that new courses can be effectively implemented. Good resources and a productive residential fieldwork experience support students' learning.

### **History**

Overall, the quality of provision is excellent

#### **Strengths:**

A-level results are consistently well above the national average

Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment

Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is well planned and reflects the strength of subject knowledge, and challenges students appropriately

The subject is well managed

#### **Areas for improvement:**

Information and communication technology is not used enough

Students' wider reading in history is not as well developed as other aspects of their work

119. Students' performance in GCE A-level examinations over the past four years has shown a steadily rising trend with a slight drop in 2000 when numbers at entry were smaller. In 1999 boys did particularly well, with 73 per cent attaining A or B grades, outperforming girls who achieved 41 per cent A or B grades. In the other three of the four years girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than nationally. Retention rates are good. Forty-two students began the AS course in September 2000 at the start of their lower sixth year, 40 entered for the exam and all passed with 65 per cent achieving an A or B grade. Sixty students started the A-level course in Year 13 and 59 completed it successfully, 58 per cent with an A or B grade. Most students show good achievement in relation to their prior attainment.

120. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of students' work confirm that standards are well above average and achievement is good. In the AS course students have made a good beginning. Essay writing is already well structured, with evidence to support individual judgements for example in a written evaluation of Trotsky. The performance of the current Year 13 students is well above average. They show highly developed debating skills and contribute confidently to discussion. Students analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively, for instance to determine its usefulness or reliability, to produce well-balanced and effective arguments. Written work is of a high standard and demonstrates a good command of the higher order skills of analysis and synthesis. Students show a good knowledge and understanding of the periods and topics being studied, but they lack the wider insights and perspectives, and more detailed historical overview that would be provided by wider reading around the subject and by an increased use of information and communication technology.

## **The quality of education**

121. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn well as a result. Very good subject knowledge and expertise are used to motivate and inform students. Teachers create a powerful learning ethos by encouraging intellectual rigour in the analysis of historical ideas. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives shared with students. Very good management of classroom discussion leads to good quality analysis by students. The relationships between teachers and students are extremely positive and underpin the work of the department. Teachers' marking is thorough: detailed, and helpful comments are made.
122. Students are well motivated and attentive. Take-up rates for the study of history in the sixth form have been consistently high over the past few years and indicate a continuing interest in the subject. Students respond well to lessons. They apply a broad range of study skills in their own researches. The work of higher-attainers shows evidence of high quality independent research, using the resources of the sixth form library and learning centre, and of extended study. There is clear progression in thinking and in learning.

## **Leadership and management**

123. The good achievement and very good teaching can be attributed to the fact that the subject is well managed by a very experienced head of department assisted by a sixth form co-ordinator for history and a hardworking team of teachers.

## **SOCIOLOGY**

Overall provision is excellent

### **Strengths:**

Standards achieved are very good

The students experience consistently very good teaching.

The students are very good learners, showing a real interest in the subject

Students' progress is tracked meticulously and supported by very effective encouragement of further improvement

The subject is very well managed

### **Areas for improvement:**

There are missed opportunities for the development of students' language and for the more productive use of their ideas

## **The scope of provision**

124. In Year 12, all students study some aspects of sociology in their general studies course. The main focus of the inspection was the course taught to A-level.

## **Standards and achievement**

125. Standards reached at A-level are consistently well above the national average and higher than those achieved in most other subjects. In the 2000 A-level examinations the proportion of students achieving grades A to B was double the national average. Students join the course with a wide range of attainment in their GCSE subjects. As a result of the very good teaching, all students make very rapid advances in the development of a sophisticated grasp of key ideas as they move through the course. Boys and girls achieve comparable standards, though a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys attains the highest grades. Very good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. This is a very popular course attracting increasing numbers of students, the great majority of whom persevere to the end. Many of those completing the course continue their interest in the subject through the pursuit of further courses in the social sciences.
126. The quality of the students' work in lessons, and the intelligent grasp of key ideas and theories revealed in their course work, echo the very good results achieved in the A-level examinations. In Year 12, higher-attaining students have a clear understanding of various ways of explaining the difference between social class and achievement in school. They compare and contrast different theoretical accounts and show a very good understanding of the issues these seek to explain. Most of the other students are very good at relating their own experience to the concepts with which they deal. The students who attain less well have difficulty coming to grips with some of the more demanding concepts. In Year 13, differences in attainment are less marked. All the students make very good progress in the refinement of their understanding of sociological enquiry when, for example, it is directed towards an analysis of crime. A striking feature of the attainment of many students is their understanding of the fact that there are competing theories and that that understanding is perpetually tentative and on the move. Year 13 students taking the general studies course show a good level of understanding of the structure of the family and the changes that have occurred in our understanding of different patterns of family life.

## **Quality of education**

127. The students following the A-level course are very well taught. The teacher's depth and breadth of knowledge lie at the heart of the success of this subject. This gives the students the confidence to ask demanding questions, knowing that the answers will take them further on in their understanding.
128. The exchanges between the teacher and the students are very effective in sustaining high expectations for attainment. Students are never allowed to settle for unchallenged assumptions, but are constantly confronted with the demand for explanations and reasons for what they presume to be the case. A further strength is the quality of the support given to the students as they are helped to understand how well they are doing and how they might further improve their work. The use of tightly structured group work when students give free rein to their ideas is used very effectively to help them to gain more confidence in tackling demanding ideas. This was evident, for example, in a Year 13 lesson when the students were exploring questions of crime and deviance. The skilful interplay between the torrent of ideas generated and the teacher's subtle interventions steered the whole class towards very productive critical engagement with the key ideas. There are a few occasions where the teacher's interventions tend to stem the flow of ideas, as a result of over-

directing the discussion. The Year 12 pupils studying the sociology element in the general studies course are taught well. They are skilfully helped to relate the ideas they handle to questions that arise in their own lives.

129. The students are expected to work hard. They respond by making excellent use of the time allocated for independent study. They are meticulous in refining and improving their work as a result of very effective feedback from the teacher. They become increasingly confident in presenting their ideas to their peers, in taking useful notes and in the presentation of their written work. Their enthusiasm for the subject is impressive and a key to the level of their creative involvement in their studies.

### **Leadership and management**

130. The subject is excellently led and supported by very clear and helpful documentation. The head of department's enthusiasm for the subject communicates itself to the students. He analyses the students' performance accurately and builds very effectively on his thorough knowledge of their learning needs. Barriers to learning are quickly identified and addressed promptly and intelligently, ensuring that all students are included in all lessons to the full extent of their capabilities. The department has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. There is a good range of resources used well. The library and the Internet are used independently and to good effect by the students.

### **Psychology**

Overall provision is good.

#### **Strengths:**

Standards achieved at A-level are very good.

The students are eager learners and work hard to succeed.

Teachers and students collaborate very well in the development of their work.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

The range of teaching methods used sometimes limits the level of students' critical involvement in lessons through discussion and debate. This is particularly true of Year 13.

The seating arrangement used by some teachers inhibits discussion.

### **Standards and achievement**

131. Results at A-level in 2000 were well above average. This represents a considerable improvement on the standards of attainment in the previous year, which was the first year that students were entered for the A-level examination. The students joining the course show a wide range of attainment, but all make good advances in their work as they become familiar with the course. They extend their knowledge and their skills in investigation quickly as they move through Year 12. Progress is slowed slightly in Year 13 where teaching does not always challenge students enough. Boys and girls achieve comparable standards. The course is increasing in popularity. Most students stay to the end of the course and enter for the A-level examination. Many students express an interest in studying psychology beyond A-level. In lessons and in other work, the standards reached by students overall are consistent with the very good results achieved at A-level. There are particular strengths in the quality of the students' individual investigations, where there is some sophisticated collecting and analysis of data. In Year 12 all the students have sufficient understanding of relevant statistical ideas to support their research. They write clearly, showing a good level of

sensitivity to questions of reliability and validity in their investigations. For example, some higher-attaining students in Year 12 produced some work of high quality in testing the hypothesis that short-term memory has a limited capacity. All the students show a good understanding of the different models invoked in the explanation of human behaviour. Many are confident in explaining, for instance, some of the limits of a behaviourist account of human action.

132. The overall quality of teaching is good, but ranges from satisfactory to very good in individual lessons. At its best, the teaching stirs the imagination and interest of the students, helping them to understand the link between what they study and their own lives. In one stimulating lesson in Year 12, looking at different theories of memory, for instance, the students were challenged by a progressively demanding sequence of group activities. The teachers' questioning encouraged them to extend their understanding through critical reflection on key ideas. The students, in turn, showed considerable confidence in trying out their ideas, becoming increasingly at home with some demanding theories. Teaching that is satisfactory has some strengths, for instance in the care taken to ensure that students understand fundamental concepts. It is weakened, however, by missed opportunities to locate what is studied in the students' everyday perceptions of the world, and through not making enough use of opportunities for students to test their ideas through discussion and debate.
133. The students' commitment to the work required to undertake credible investigations is excellent. They take great care to support their work with the right level of evidence and ensure that they take account of the most significant work by psychologists in the field. They enjoy psychology and see it as illuminating their own lives. They are good learners, eager to work to the full extent of their competence. In this they are well served by some good work by the teachers in pointing out the areas where they could improve and providing the support to do so.

### **Leadership and management**

134. The department is well led and is supported by clear documentation. The team works effectively, the teachers supporting one another in building up the range of strategies needed to engage the interest and enthusiasm of the students. Psychology is taught in a science laboratory. However imaginative the teachers are in rearranging desks and tables, the accommodation does not provide an atmosphere conducive to the kinds of exchange required to deepen students' involvement in the subject. However, some teachers make better use of the accommodation than others. Procedures for keeping track of students' progress are good.

### **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

135. The inspection focused on: the two English A-level courses, English language and English literature where attainment is good; French where standards, in 2000, were just above average at A-level; and German where A-level results were average. In lessons, however, students show good standards in their grasp of French and German.



## ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

### **Strengths:**

The good, and often very good, teaching enables students to make good progress in the knowledge of the texts they read and the written work they produce.

Students have regular opportunities to contribute to classroom activities and to become independent learners.

### **Areas for improvement:**

Departmental documentation does not show clearly how the sixth form English syllabus is to be organised and put into practice in the classroom.

### **Standards and achievement**

136. Standards in English on entry to the sixth form are good, with students achieving above-average grades in their GCSE English language and English literature examinations. Students then go on to make good progress, and achieve standards above the national average. This is reflected in the 2000 A-level results where students achieved above-average grades. There was a dip in the unconfirmed 2001 English literature results.
137. Standards in all areas of work for students in Years 12 and 13 are good. Students have good oral skills: the majority articulate their ideas in a confident, logical and well-structured manner. This is helped by regular opportunities for students to engage in well-organised oral work. This is a significant factor in students' competence in developing and expressing a strong personal view about the texts they are studying, which in turn contributes to the quality of their personal response in written work. Students listen to and respect one another's opinions. Occasionally, a few students show a lack confidence in speaking. They are good listeners, but are happy to defer to their teachers and the more confident members of the group.
138. Virtually all students in the sixth form are good readers, with most of them having well-developed reading skills. The majority show a clear understanding of the psychological nature of the characters in the plays and novels they read. They appreciate the writer's use of language, and read for subtext and inference. High-attaining students display a clear understanding of the issues and ideas in the books and other printed materials they read.
139. The standard of written work seen is good, with many students producing mature and perceptive pieces of writing. The majority of students make a personal response to the poetry, plays and novels they read. Students' recorded responses are well supported by relevant quotations, as they make good comparisons to two or more texts or genres. An examination of bibliographies at the end of essays indicates that students engage in personal research and refer to a number of expert opinions before deciding on their own. Students on the A-level English language course show good linguistic and critical and analytical skills, and write in detail about the use of language in a range of different texts and contexts. Many students display good information and communication technology skills, and word process their essays.

## Quality of education

140. The teaching of A-level English is good overall, with very good teaching in half the lessons observed. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students effectively. They have high expectations of attainment and provide students with a range of challenging activities. Students have regular opportunities to work in groups, take some control of lessons and become independent learners. This helps them to develop a significant personal response to the poems, plays, novels and factual texts they read, which in turn positively influences their good and often very good written work. Teachers display real personal enthusiasm in their work and create an animated and rigorous working environment in which learning thrives. Students respond well, taking a positive attitude towards their work in the interest and sustained concentration they bring to lessons. Good working relationships exist between teachers and students. This establishes a sense of common purpose. The department uses good marking and assessment procedures. Teachers' comments on students' work are very helpful, and include specific targets for improvement. Discussions with students indicate that they hold their English teachers in high esteem and are very happy about their choice of courses. English is a very popular subject in the sixth form with a very high retention rate.

## Leadership and management

141. The subject is well led. There are strong collaborative partnerships in the department. These close and informal partnerships are not, however, under-pinned by documentation that clearly identifies how the A-level English syllabus is to be organised and interpreted in classroom practice. The new head of department is engaged in an audit of the whole department in order to ensure consistency in documentation and practices across all age groups.

## French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is good.

### **Strengths:**

Students apply their understanding of grammatical structures well, particularly in written work.

Listening skills are well developed and students have a sound vocabulary base.

Teaching is good. Teachers use the French and German consistently for classroom instruction and lessons contain a well-planned range of activities that ensure the participation of all students. All teachers are very competent linguists.

Students have a very positive attitude to their studies. They are industrious and attentive

The subject is well led and schemes of work provide clear guidance. Teachers use French consistently for classroom instruction.

### **Areas for improvement:**

Students are reluctant to take the lead in speaking and tend not to respond orally without prompting.

There is insufficient use of information and communication technology and television, video to provide stimulus for learning.

The number of students continuing from Year 12 to Year 13 is disappointing.

## **Standards and achievement**

142. A-level results in 2000 were above average. All students gained a pass grade and the proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and B was a little above average.
143. The quality of the work seen in both Years 12 and 13 is above average. This reflects the generally good teaching that students enjoy and the high expectations that teachers set. Students in Year 13 have a solid grasp of grammatical structures and a firm knowledge of vocabulary. In paired work they discuss in a mature fashion the issue of crime and punishment using a wide range of language. Students' written work shows a good attention to accuracy and breadth of language.
144. Students in Year 12 are only four weeks into the course but are already achieving in line with expectations. They understand information in French at native-speed with little help, and already understand and apply more complex grammatical structures. Spoken language, however, is weaker. Pronunciation is still somewhat anglicised and although students cope well in normal question and answer situations they rarely initiate language unprompted. Written work is usually accurate and students use tenses correctly.

## **Quality of education**

145. Teaching is good and students respond well to the well-planned lessons. All teachers are native speakers. French is used consistently for all classroom communication. This is having a beneficial effect on students' listening skills. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. In the best lessons teachers are adept at rephrasing to ensure that students understand. All lessons contain a good range of activities requiring students to participate fully. In a Year 13 lesson, for instance, a reading task required students to sift through information and present a case for or against the arming of police in an increasingly violent society. This was a pertinent topic which held the interest of the group and produced a good range of language.
146. Students work is regularly marked. There is evidence of regular assessment throughout lessons. Students take a mature approach to self-correction of their work and respond well to the feedback they receive.
147. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies and learn well. They are always attentive, interact well both with their teachers and one another and are ready to seek help or clarification. In paired or group activities they take a mature approach. In Year 12, in particular, they do not communicate easily in French beyond the requirements of the specific tasks. They use dictionaries well, make appropriate notes and support one another in seeking information.

## **Leadership and management**

148. The subject is well led. Schemes of work for AS and A-level courses are clear and detailed. The programme builds well upon what has been learned in Years 10 and 11. The arrangements for tracking students' progress and reviewing their work against predictions of success are good. Resources for sixth form courses are, however, limited, with little opportunity for regular use of television, video and information and communication technology.

## German

Overall, the quality of provision in German is good.

### **Strengths:**

Students achieve well.

Teaching is very good.

Students enjoy their studies and have a very positive attitude to their work.

The subject is well led.

### **Areas for improvement:**

Students do not readily initiate the foreign language to question or comment.

Insufficient use is made of television, video and information and communication technology.

## **Attainment and achievement**

149. Results in the 2000 A-level examination were broadly in line with the national average. All students passed, but the entry was too small for secure generalisations about standards. The results maintained levels of attainment since the last inspection and built on improving and above-average grades at GCSE.

150. Students' achievement in both Year 12 and Year 13 is consistently good and is the result of very high quality teaching. Teachers expect high standards and students respond accordingly. In Year 13 the students' breadth of vocabulary and mastery of complex grammatical points is good and often very good indeed. Comprehension of spoken text at native-speaker speed is of a high level and students write with accuracy often using complex language. Students speak well, pronunciation and intonation are good and they are willing to use extended language involving difficult grammatical constructions. For example, in a discussion on social issues students negotiated in pairs and justified their opinions with flair and accuracy.

151. In Year 12, students build very effectively on the language acquired before they joined the sixth form, already writing and speaking using more complex language. Achievement is already above average at this early point in their studies. Students have little difficulty in understanding recorded text or information delivered at native-speed. In a discussion about ideal personal and professional qualities students, without exception, contributed ideas fluently and accurately. Although there are some early signs of individual students being more creative with the language, there is still a reticence amongst many to communicate in the foreign language without being prompted.

## **Quality of education**

152. Teaching is a particular strength and the quality of teaching overall is very good. All teachers are very competent linguists and their enthusiasm and commitment has a very positive impact upon students' enjoyment of the subject. German is used consistently for all classroom communication and this does much to enhance students' listening skills. Pace and variety are hallmarks of all lessons and the appropriate emphasis upon strengthening students' grasp of grammar provides a solid foundation for ensuring progress. For instance, in an excellent Year 13 lesson on environmental issues the very high levels of expectation from the teacher revealed

in the use of demanding open-ended questions resulted in a stimulating discussion using complex and fluent language.

153. Students' work is regularly marked with useful commentary on how to improve it. Effective feedback and praise are features of all lessons. Students correct their own work unprompted and are prepared to seek support to refine their work.
154. The attitude of students to their work is exemplary. Their commitment and interest is outstanding and they respond in a very mature manner to group discussion or paired tasks. They respect and appreciate the high standards set by their teachers and are determined to do well.

### **Leadership and management**

155. The subject is well led. There are clear and detailed schemes of work supporting a smooth transition to sixth form work. The procedures for setting targets, tracking students' progress and reviewing progress are good. As with French, resources are limited.