

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE DEEPINGS SCHOOL**

Deeping St James

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120635

Headteacher: Dr D A Bryars

Reporting inspector: Nigel Pett  
17331

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2002

Inspection number: 190094

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Park Road Deeping St James Peterborough
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Rea
Date of previous inspection:	14 <sup>th</sup> October 1996

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17331	N A Pett	Registered inspector		Standards; How well are pupils taught? How good are learning opportunities; How well is the school led and managed?
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31986	B Medhurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language	
23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Science; Physics (Post-16)	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology; Information and communication technology	
19866	P Austin	Team inspector	Art	
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
31191	D Sylph	Team inspector	History	
31783	G Holland	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
1340	D Wigley	Team inspector	Music	
18755	R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
12003	A Marfleet	Team inspector	Religious education	
28002	S Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Equality of opportunity.	
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1819	R Crowther	Team inspector	Post 16 Business education	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school serves Deeping St James and Market Deeping, two adjacent settlements located by the River Welland to the north of Peterborough. Pupils come from these two settlements and from the many villages which surround the towns in this rural area. There is a mix of established housing and much recent development, with many people commuting to work. There are 1102 pupils aged between 11 and 16 and 190 sixth form students, making the school and sixth form larger than the average. The socio-economic backgrounds are above average, and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Their ethnic heritage is mainly white European, and the percentage of pupils not having English as their first language is well below the national average. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 174, and 31 hold statements to address their specific needs. These numbers are broadly average. On entry, a significant proportion of pupils has achieved the national average for their age. The school aims to achieve excellence and to provide for the needs of all of its pupils and students, and to develop their personal skills, confidence and academic potential.

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

This is a very effective school with significant strengths, which clearly outweigh the areas it needs to improve. Pupils and students achieve well and results in National Curriculum tests and public examinations are well above average. The good quality of teaching and positive ethos lead to good learning opportunities. The school is very well led by the headteacher and effectively managed, giving it the potential to achieve its aim as a centre of excellence for learning. It gives very good value for money.

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

- Achieves good standards in work in all year groups.
- Achieves good standards in behaviour, attitudes and values.
- Provides very effectively for pupils' and students' personal development, which leads to its positive learning ethos.
- Teaches effectively to promote the good progress of the large majority of pupils and students.
- Cares well for its pupils and students and has good inclusion.
- Provides very good extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities.
- Enjoys a good partnership with its parents and enjoys very good support from the community.
- Sets clear targets for improvement through strong and effective leadership.

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

- Continuing to develop the very good approaches to assessment so that they are consistently used.
- The use of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum.
- The provision for spiritual and multicultural development.
- The statutory provision for special educational needs, a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1996. The overall improvement has been good. Standards have risen overall and faster than the national trend. It has sustained its ethos as a caring school. The quality of teaching has been significantly improved. The review of procedures for assessment has been good, and is developing the cohesive use of target setting for pupils and students and as a whole-school approach to performance management. Improvement in marking has been satisfactory but is still inconsistent. Provision for the more able has been much improved but there is still inconsistency in the support for pupils with learning difficulties. The school recognises this and is taking appropriate action. The whole-school development planning and use of resources is now good and improvement in the co-ordination of information and communication technology is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form have not been met and progress has been unsatisfactory. The quality of assemblies has been improved but the requirements for a daily act of collective worship are still not met.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	B	

**Key**

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

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are consistently above the national average and show that pupils make good progress between Years 7 and 9. The standards achieved in the last three years at GCSE have been consistently above average in comparison with the national results. The trend for improvement has been in line with the national trend. In comparison with similar schools, results are average. GCE A-level results are generally above the national average. Targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the national levels at GCSE have been met. From inspection evidence, standards for the large majority of pupils reflect these results. Standards by the age of 14 are at least in line with the average, and often above. Standards by the age of 16 are also at least in line with the average and often above, reflecting the previous achievements in GCSE examinations and showing that there is good added value. Girls achieve better than boys but both perform better than boys and girls nationally. Most pupils and students make good progress overall, and those with special educational needs achieve well, although there are some shortcomings in their provision. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and achieve well in comparison with their peers. Sixth form standards are also good, with many students achieving in line with, and a significant number well above, average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils and students have very good attitudes towards their work and teachers. Although a small minority of pupils do not respond to the high expectations, the large majority are proud of their school, enjoy life and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The behaviour of most pupils and students reflects the fact that they understand the difference between right and wrong. A small minority of pupils are not always sensible and their behaviour can be antisocial.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Many pupils and students show responsibility and care. They collaborate well and have good relationships with teachers and each other.
Attendance	The overall attendance figures are good. Both authorised and unauthorised absences for the last year were better than the average for secondary schools nationally.

The overall positive attitudes, good behaviour and strength of relationships contribute extensively to the working and achieving ethos of the school. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations made of them and appreciate the opportunities which they experience, taking good advantage of them as well as contributing well to the overall life of the school. Most care for their school and whilst there is no graffiti, there is a significant amount of litter after breaks and lunchtimes. The school has an ethos of fair play.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged 16-18 years
Lessons seen overall	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 overall quality of teaching is consistently good, and in virtually all year groups at least a quarter of teaching seen was very good, with some excellent teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in only a very small minority of lessons. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Teaching of literacy is good, often with support in other subjects, and numeracy is satisfactory. Inspection evidence shows that teaching has a positive impact on pupils' and students' learning and leads to their good progress and subsequent standards; there is much teaching which is consistently good over time. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, providing a stimulating challenge, to which pupils and students willingly respond. Teachers enthuse their pupils and students, and work set meets their differing needs. Where there are some shortcomings, expectations and challenge, as well as strategies, are underdeveloped with regard to pupil involvement in their learning. In these lessons, pupils with special educational needs are given satisfactory support. Overall, teaching is a significant strength of the school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is breadth and balance, and the curriculum is relevant. The need to widen opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is recognised. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities are a significant strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is satisfactory for pupils with learning difficulties and the needs of gifted and talented pupils are generally well met. Statutory requirements for annual reviews are not met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Strategies support this minority of pupils well and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision is made for personal development. Moral and social provision is very good but spiritual and cultural development is underdeveloped.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall care is good. Pupils are well known and the developing trends in assessment procedures are supporting their learning.

The curriculum is enhanced by the wide range of opportunities in Years 7-9 for 'Tuesday +' in which they can pursue a wide range of activities. The whole-school PSE programme is good. In Years 10 and 11, there are limited opportunities for vocational education, and the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is developing, but there is insufficient use of individual education plans and learning support staff are not always well involved in lesson planning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very clear direction and leads the school most effectively. There is a good professional partnership with the leadership group and the school is effectively managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The work of the governors is effective but they do not fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities in relation to the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Analysis of tests results and recording and analysis of assessment information are well done. This enables the setting of teacher and pupil targets to support progress and achievement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Financial, staffing and physical resources are well used and the school is giving good value for money.

The leadership has high expectations, is enabling the school to improve its standards and is enhancing the opportunities for its pupils and students. Management strategies are generally effective and the delegation of roles and responsibilities within the performance management strategy is developing well. The management of subjects is generally good. Governors do not ensure that statutory requirements for annual reviews for special educational needs, a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are met. The school recognises that, even in the face of its current achievements, it can further improve its provision and it has the potential to achieve its aim of being a centre of excellence for learning. The school is appropriately staffed and resources are satisfactory. The accommodation broadly meets the needs of the curriculum and the pupils and students, although some areas require refurbishment. Displays are good and add to the overall good quality of the environment.

## 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 enjoy school.</li> <li>• The high expectations set.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The standards and progress being achieved by their children.</li> <li>• The generally good standards of behaviour.</li> <li>• That the school helps their children to mature and become responsible.</li> <li>• The extra-curricular and enrichment activities.</li> <li>• That they can approach the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information about the progress their children are making.</li> <li>• The amount of homework set.</li> <li>• The behaviour of a minority of pupils.</li> <li>• How the school works with them.</li> </ul>

There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a small minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most. Reports comply with statutory requirements and give appropriate information, although they sometimes lack specific targets. There is some variation in homework but overall it does extend pupils' and students' learning. Standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils do let the school down.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

There are 190 students in this large comprehensive school and this makes it larger than the average sixth form nationally. The socio-economic backgrounds are above average, and the ethnic heritage is mainly white European. A minority of students are identified as having special educational needs. Attainment on entry is average as the entry to the sixth form is open.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Students achieve well through an appropriate range of AS and A level courses. Teaching is good. The students are effectively involved in the life of the school. Taking account of the quality of teaching, courses offered and the progress and standards achieved, the provision is cost-effective and in comparison with national provision, the school provides well and adequately for the students.

**Strengths**

- Most students achieve well for their prior attainment.
- Students have good attitudes and relationships, and behave well.
- Students are well taught.
- Students are effectively involved in the life of the school.

**What could be improved**

- The consistency in support and guidance.
- Quality of accommodation and access to computers during private study time.
- Overall provision for the performing studies course.
- Widening opportunities for vocational experiences.
- Meeting the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious education.

*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> Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. Teaching is good overall and staff use their subject expertise well.
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Standards are improving and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. The strong subject knowledge of the teachers leads to good teaching.
Business	<b>Good.</b> Achievement is very good, reflecting the good quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes of the students. Teaching is good. Accommodation and access to computers is only satisfactory.
Economics	<b>Good.</b> Well-planned teaching stimulates students to work of good quality, leading to above-average attainment at AS and A level.
Performing Studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are satisfactory overall as there are differences both between standards in the first and second year, and between boys and girls. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. A lack of clarity in management and leadership has a negative effect upon student attainment.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average, and reflect differences between year groups. The quality of teaching is consistently good.
History	<b>Good.</b> Current standards of attainment are above national expectations. Most students achieve above their potential. Teaching is good. Student attitudes are positive. Improvement since the last inspection is good.
English	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good. Standards achieved are above average and relationships between staff and students are exemplary.
German	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is good, and the challenging work impacts greatly on students' learning. Students are dedicated and hard-working. Results in examinations are broadly in line with national averages.

The following subjects were also sampled and judgements are:

There is very good provision in communication studies and music and standards are above average. Provision is good in art, biology and chemistry, and satisfactory in drama, French, information and communication technology, theology, sociology and psychology. Provision is unsatisfactory for religious education for all students as there is no opportunity for this subject and statutory requirements are not met. Standards are above average in art, communication studies, design and technology, information and communication technology and music. Standards are average in biology, chemistry, drama, French, physical education, psychology, sociology and theology.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students consider that they are well taught and thus supported in their learning. There is generally good support for higher education courses and applications but the provision for other areas of vocational training and careers is less well developed. Assessment procedures are effectively developed and students consider that they are informed about their progress.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. There is effective development of the curriculum for A and AS courses and this is supplemented by some vocational opportunities. Key Skills have been introduced but the school recognises that further opportunities with alternative accreditation to A and AS level are required. Attention is also required to further extend the quality of guidance and support.

Many students involve themselves well in the life of the school through supporting classes in Tuesday + and PSE activities. They carry out their roles of mentoring and support very well. Access to computers during private study is a concern. The provision for religious education does not comply with statutory requirements.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

These views were gained from returns to the questionnaire and from discussions with students.

<b>What students like about the sixth form</b>	<b>What they feel could be improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How they are helped to settle into the sixth form.</li> <li>• They are well taught and their work is well assessed.</li> <li>• Helped to study independently.</li> <li>• Good range of activities.</li> <li>• Courses generally meet their aspirations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of advice and guidance for their future options.</li> <li>• The quality of accommodation and access to ICT.</li> <li>• Information which they are given about their progress.</li> <li>• Their accommodation.</li> </ul>

Overall, students' views are positive. They enjoy the range of activities and would recommend their sixth form to pupils and other students. Inspectors recognise that there are some shortcomings in support and guidance and in the overall accommodation.

## **COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry in Year 7, the pupils' prior attainment shows a significant majority who have achieved the national average for their age. A minority have been identified as having special educational needs and a small minority enter with English as an additional language. There are a proportion who have achieved high prior levels in their National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven.
2. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, when pupils are aged fourteen, show that the very large majority of pupils have made good progress. Well-above-average attainment is achieved in all core subjects together. Results in English, mathematics and science were well above average at the expected levels, and for the higher levels. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average in all three subjects at the expected level and were average for English and science but below for mathematics at the higher levels. Taken together, the average points score was average in comparison with similar schools. The trend for improvement was above the national trend. Girls perform better than boys, but both perform well in relation to national results. Targets set have been met in recent years and exceeded.
3. Results at GCSE in 2001 were well above average at A\* to C and A\* to G. Girls perform slightly better than boys. In comparison with national results, the percentage gaining 5 A\* to C and 5 A\* to G grades was well above average, and has been for the last three years. When similar schools are taken into account, the average points score was above average and the proportion gaining A\*-G grades was well above, with A\*-C grades above and 1 A\* to G close to average. Targets set for 2001 were met. The trend was in line with improvement nationally. In many subjects, pupils achieve well and results were above average.
4. The overall picture of good achievement and attainment is seen from inspection evidence. By the end of Years 9 and 11, the standards being achieved in the large majority of subjects are above average. Standards are average in information and communication technology overall, reflecting the provision for the use of computers across the curriculum. Standards are average in art and below average in drama at the end of Year 9, but improve and are above average in art and average in drama by Year 11. Standards are well above average in mathematics, music and business education by Year 11. In many subjects, pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking in formal situations are above average. The Key Stage 3 literacy strategy is being well implemented. Practice is not yet consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically. Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory overall. A whole-school numeracy policy, incorporating the national numeracy strategy, has been developed that recognises the uses of numeracy in all other areas of the curriculum and provides a good framework for consistent application of mathematics across the school. Basic skills lessons supplement mathematics lessons in reinforcing the underlying skills required to handle numbers confidently.
5. The overall progress of pupils is good and, for a significant proportion, very good. This reflects the good quality of teaching but also the positive attitudes towards their work shown by pupils. Thus there is good added value for many pupils and they achieve better results than would be expected for their prior attainment. The differing needs of pupils are generally well met through the inclusive teaching, although there are some shortcomings for pupils with special educational needs. Overall, many of these pupils achieve well but the limited use of individual education plans and the deployment of learning support staff occasionally has a detrimental effect on their progress. Many are making satisfactory progress overall and, in some subject areas, for example, mathematics, they are achieving well. Those pupils who are withdrawn for small group work on literacy and to use the Successmaker programme make good progress with their reading. The needs of a minority of pupils with English as an additional language are generally well met and they achieve well. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and, whilst there is some inconsistency in meeting their needs and challenging them sufficiently, the large majority achieve well, as shown in their results.

## **Sixth form**

6. Entry to the sixth form is broadly open and this is reflected in the overall results as there is a range of prior attainment on entry. As in Year 11 GCSE results, there is a clear element of added value for many students. The comparable data shows that results in GCE A level and AS levels have been well above average against all schools and overall in all post 16 education institutions. The results for 2001 show that the average points score was below the average but that, when taking into account the overall figures for all GCE A, AS, VCE and GNVQ examinations, the points score per entry was very close to the national average. When taking into account the GCE, VCE and Advanced GNVQ examinations alone, average points score was above average.
7. Inspection evidence shows that these results are well reflected in current standards, which are overall above average. Nine subjects were inspected in depth and standards in these subjects were generally above average except in mathematics, where they are average. Standards were below average in performing studies, and the school recognises that it has not been vigilant enough in monitoring the provision. In subjects sampled, standards are above average in art, communication studies, design and technology, information and communication technology and music, and are average in all other subjects.

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

8. The overall tone of attitudes, values, behaviour and personal development has been well maintained since the last inspection and remains a significant feature of the school. Throughout, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. A significant proportion have very good attitudes, which are reflected in their standards of achievement, but a small minority do not always respond sensibly and their attitudes have a detrimental effect on their achievement and the overall ethos of the school. The large majority of pupils enjoy school and this is borne out by parents' views. In lessons where the teaching is good or better, pupils are motivated, interested and responsive, showing a very positive attitude to their work. Pupils generally show a high degree of independence and work at a good pace. They show commitment and enthusiasm for their work, maintaining concentration and persevering when faced with challenging tasks. This is evidenced, for example, in lessons across the year groups in mathematics, science, history, religious education and music. They usually undertake work with enjoyment and confidence, listening attentively and making effective use of their developing skills. Collaborative work is usually good and pupils are mutually supportive and encouraging, as in a Year 9 basic skills lesson where pupils were working independently and in small groups, to solve number squares. Equally, in drama and information and communication technology lessons, pupils work well together. They offered each other encouragement and worked with a common sense of purpose, sharing ideas and stimulating their thinking to deepen their understanding. Pupils generally show initiative in organising and planning their work and their ability to work independently increases as they progress through the school. However, in the minority of lessons, when teachers' expectations are inappropriate, when lessons lack pace or when objectives are unclear, the attitudes of a minority of pupils may become unsatisfactory.
9. Good relationships exist throughout the school and pupils and staff know each other well. Pupils treat each other and adults with courtesy, respect and consideration. They work well together in the year councils, contributing constructive ideas about what they would like to see improved, such as the school uniform, and identifying and supporting a range of charities. Pupils undertake a very wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities with enthusiasm and commitment. These provide good opportunities for personal and social development and include activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, chocolate making, self defence and model railways. It is also seen in the Tuesday + lessons, where pupils of different ages undertake a very wide range of activities. Pupils generally work effectively in groups and are able to support each other in work and extra-curricular activities, understanding the impact of their actions on others, showing initiative and taking responsibility.
10. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually good and makes a positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as an orderly community that values the rights of all pupils to learn. On occasions, a minority behaves in an unacceptable manner but these instances are dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils are trustworthy and property and equipment are treated with care. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. However, at the end of breaks and lunchtime there is

an unacceptable amount of litter strewn around the dining hall, corridors and the site. This is not because of a shortage of suitably placed and sized bins but because of a failure to use the bins that are provided. Pupils generally respond well to the school's high expectations and ethos which makes them responsible for their own behaviour and actions. Whilst there are a few incidents of bullying, these are usually identified very quickly and dealt with effectively. Pupils are confident that concerns will be addressed promptly and are clear that sanctions will be applied in the rare case of any form of oppressive behaviour which has, exceptionally, included racist comments. During the previous year, there have been 26 fixed-period and four permanent exclusions, involving 14 boys and seven girls. This shows an increase on the number of exclusions found in the year prior to the previous inspection (16 fixed-period and four permanent exclusions). However, exclusion is used effectively and appropriately as part of an overall strategy to promote high standards of behaviour.

11. Overall attendance is good. In 2000/1, the attendance level of 92.5 per cent was above the national average (90.9 per cent) and showed an improvement on that found at the time of the previous inspection. Although this level of attendance showed a decline on that recorded during the previous two years, it reflected a national picture in that respect. Unauthorised absence in 2001/2 was 0.8 per cent which is better than the national average (1.1 per cent).
12. The attitudes, behaviour and attendance of the large majority of pupils have a positive effect on achievement and progress.

### **Sixth form**

13. Students have very positive attitudes to learning and to school. They appreciate the opportunities afforded and the good support of teachers. They collaborate well and want to learn. Students are developing well a responsibility for their own learning and engage in independent research as a means of extending their learning and understanding. Students make a very good contribution to the life and work of the school, benefiting the learning and personal development of both themselves and younger pupils. For example, students assist with the delivery of the Tuesday + and the personal, social and health education programme of studies to younger pupils, and a small group of Year 13 students studying travel and tourism organised a very good, and extremely professional, one-day conference. They had planned the event with a balanced programme to contribute to students' understanding of the strategic, ethical and commercial aspects of travel and tourism, secured sponsorship, arranged speakers and an excellent venue in a country club, and had produced a professional, full-colour brochure. Over 100 delegate places had been sold to other local schools. Year 12 students assisted on the day by volunteering to undertake various duties such as assisting with the supervision of visitors' car parking. Ever mindful of the needs of others, students had also organised some fund raising activities to enable them to make a donation to a local charity.
14. The good relationships between students, and between students and staff, benefit their collaborative work and mutual support. They also enjoy good relationships with the rest of the school. Students value each others' feelings, values and beliefs, and reflect well on the impact of their actions on others and on ethical issues such as those associated with the controversy surrounding the MMR vaccine. Behaviour is generally good. Students are courteous and trustworthy, and show respect for property.
15. Formal and informal discussions with students throughout the week of the inspection indicate that they generally have positive views of the school, although those students who completed a questionnaire prior to the inspection expressed mixed views but, overall, stated that they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. Members of the sixth form are treated as young adults and valued as responsible members of the school community. Overall attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. In 2000/1 an attendance level of 91.2 per cent with 0.9 per cent unauthorised absence was recorded. These figures are slightly below those found in the main school.

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

16. The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection and over time is good. It provides well for the differing needs of pupils and the provision in many subjects leads to good standards of attainment and achievement. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.



17. Of the 143 lessons inspected, virtually all were satisfactory or better. Nearly three quarters were good lessons, and a quarter very good with an occasional element of excellence. The good quality of teaching reflects the fact that lessons are effectively planned and the learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the outset. This helps to set a good learning climate in which there is an effective partnership between teacher and taught. Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge, especially in the way that they have the confidence to develop pupils' ideas and to question them, thus extending knowledge, understanding and skills.
18. In the best lessons, there is effective development of key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Not all teachers plan effectively and consistently to ensure that they support the development of these key skills, and opportunities are missed. For example, in English and mathematics, there are good developments and support for skills, and in subjects such as design and technology, geography and science, good attention is given to both literacy and numeracy. Pupils are taught research skills in geography as, for example, a Year 9 class made appropriate supervised use of the library facilities to research and present facts for their topic. Subject-specific vocabulary is well tackled and pupils thus understand what they are saying. In a science lesson, the teacher's skilful application of the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy ensured that learning developed understanding. The use of computers to support the application of skills in information and communication technology is variable and leads to the overall average standards. In good practice progress is commensurate, for example, in English, a Year 8 class made very good gains in learning how to produce a presentation using text and graphical images.
19. A major contributory factor to the good teaching is the expectation of the teachers for behaviour and work. In a good proportion of lessons, these expectations are high and frequently good, which leads to the good standards being achieved. The good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is achieved through quality classroom management and elements of humour. In the best lessons, there is a high level of respect and this encourages good learning. Most pupils feel that they can approach their teachers with problems and are not disappointed. Teachers expect work to be completed and the work that they set is well tailored to meet the differing needs of pupils, be they gifted and talented academically or with a range of learning difficulties. This involves the use of a good range of learning resources, for example, in music, where the provision of worksheets catering for the needs of individual pupils is central to the reason why most pupils make good progress, and often very good progress. In mathematics, within sets, three levels of work were available to support or extend pupils as appropriate. Time is often used well, with lessons having a brisk pace and targets set for the completion of elements of work, as, for example, in a very good Year 10 history lesson where each task had a short deadline and the pace of work was brisk. In many instances, there is good use of homework which develops pupils learning, although in a minority of classes the practice is inconsistent. There is also inconsistency in marking and in the use of assessment. There are examples in and across subjects of exemplary marking which really shows pupils how they have achieved and how they might still improve their work. Good practice in assessment includes target setting, and outcomes are well used to plan further work. Nevertheless, there are some teachers whose practice is inadequate and this reflects the overall quality of monitoring by subject leaders and senior staff which does not address this situation.
20. For pupils with learning difficulties, the deployment and involvement of learning support staff raises issues of good and indifferent practice. The learning support assistants are very knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils they are supporting and provide sufficient challenge to enable them to become increasingly independent. Where good, it supports pupils very well and adds to their progress. However, there is insufficient planning for lessons between subject teachers and learning support assistants which reduces the effectiveness of support. Some teachers are not aware of individual pupils' needs as detailed on their individual education plans and so do not use these to provide adapted teaching strategies and lesson content. The teaching of pupils in withdrawal groups is good because staff are aware of pupils' needs and use them to set targets. The support for the minority of pupils with English as an additional language is good and where they are taught teachers generally support the development of their vocabulary well.
21. This overall strength leads to good learning outcomes, as shown by results and standards being achieved in most subjects. The effective teaching enables pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding which they use effectively in their subsequent work. Many teachers enhance learning through effective questioning and this works well. Maintaining pupils' interests and involving them in

the learning process is also an important element in the overall success being achieved. Teachers give opportunities which develop independent learning techniques and many pupils find these challenging and enjoyable. Where shortcomings in teaching occur, and learning is not as effective, is when the pace slackens, and lessons are too directed by teachers. In a small minority of lessons, there is evidence that some pupils do not respond sensibly and this has a negative impact on learning for them and for the whole class.

### **Sixth form**

22. Teaching is good overall, has improved since the last inspection and is contributing greatly to the quality of learning and to improving standards. Almost 80 per cent of the teaching is good or better, and over a quarter is very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers' profound knowledge and understanding of their specialisms is a very strong feature and in virtually all subjects there are examples of good and very good teaching. In a Year 13 physical education lesson on world games, excellent teaching was seen. The very good planning ensured that students worked on appropriate tasks, were clear as to what was expected of them and were able to develop personal skills of communication, reasoning, debating and forming conclusions. The excellent resources, including newspapers and the Internet, enabled them to appreciate a wide range of attitudes and values, all facilitated by the teacher's skilful input and intervention.
23. Teachers use a wide range of methods to improve the learning of their students. In a Year 13 economics lesson, students were exploring the impact of changing values of currency and use of exchange rates, leading to the examination of the impact of devaluation. From inviting students to build up a flowchart on the board, the teacher then required students to work individually to write statements on the impact of devaluation on the current account. He then posed questions individually around that context to make students think, justify and extend their answers. At the end of the session, he linked into a further task involving elasticity of price and its effects on exports and imports. Where the methods used are less active, as in a Year 13 English lesson, opportunities for enhancing the impact of learning are lost. The use of pair work, for example, as part of a discussion on a Shakespeare play, would have injected variety and vitality into what became a dull and rather static atmosphere, as the debate progressed.
24. Lessons are well planned, particularly in a Year 12 physics lesson, where, in a module on motion, the teacher was discussing the key points when planning experimental work. The teacher had a good knowledge of the students' capabilities and had provided support sheets for those who required additional advice about key points. The more able students were extended by more detailed error work on in-depth analysis of graph plotting to identify relationships. Where planning is weak, however, as in a Year 13 geography lesson, with one activity delivered at one pace, and teacher-led, the students become uncomfortable, and there is a lack of spontaneity.
25. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. In many subjects, the work is consistently challenging, stretching the students to their limits. In a Year 12 French lesson on the topic of drugs, the teacher was challenging students to match the French terms to explanations and paraphrases in the language, sometimes very difficult if they had close or almost similar meanings. To consolidate this knowledge, she then required students to transcribe a short passage on the topic from dictation. This demanded instant recall of all manner of basic knowledge, such as adjective agreements, verb endings, like-sounding words and phrases, which are obvious only in context, but not in pronunciation.
26. Students' ability to work independently, show initiative and have a clear knowledge of their learning is very good overall. In business education and physical education, particularly, they assume a great responsibility for the amount and quality of the work they produce. This is the major reason for their good progress.

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

27. The curriculum is broad and balanced for both Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11. There are good opportunities in Years 7-9 for the study of two modern foreign languages and also for Tuesday +, a period set aside each week for some 40 different enrichment sessions over the course of the year.

Pupils of different ages choose their session for a designated module and the range involves academic subjects, cultural pursuits and sporting activities. Teachers operate in areas outside of their specific subject expertise and these sessions contribute exceptionally well to developing pupils' interests and their personal development. Drama is now available as a separate subject, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. The range of choices for Years 10 and 11 is sound. The continuity from Years 7-9 exists through all National Curriculum subjects and there is the addition of business studies as a vocational course. Pupils have the opportunity for work experience in Year 10 and this is effective in developing their understanding of the workplace and decision making for their future. The school has recognised the need to develop an alternative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for a minority of pupils and planning is well advanced. Learning opportunities are well developed through effective teaching and this leads to good achievement, although there are shortcomings in the overall provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, as outlined in the teaching paragraphs above. Information and communication technology is covered better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11, and this reflects the fact that it is not adequately assessed to ensure that appropriate learning opportunities are identified.

28. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum, including being expected to take at least one modern foreign language. They are taught in groups with their peers, with very little withdrawal for basic skills development. Withdrawal sessions are carefully planned and care is taken to schedule them so that access to the full curriculum is not denied. All pupils are able to benefit from the curriculum provided.
29. Extra-curricular activities are very good. There are many links to Tuesday + and also opportunities, which are well supported, for sport, school performances of drama and music, cultural and exchange visits and general clubs. Sporting fixtures take place with other schools and pupils and students gain representative honours. Activities have included summer schools, science and mathematics workshops, a business challenge day for Year 10 pupils and the development of close links with universities which include outreach and conferences. The learning opportunities for personal development are enhanced through generally effective coverage of sex education, drug abuse and the dangers of smoking, through subject lessons, a personal and social education programme and Tuesday +. The overall provision for careers education is sound. It is linked to the personal development programmes and includes information for vocational courses at other institutions. Very good use is made of the community to enhance learning. This include courses, work in appropriate subjects and access to and involvement of members of the community in a wealth of activities, and for work experience. There are also good links with feeder primary schools which support the continuity and progression of the pupils. An equal opportunities policy is in place in all subject departments, and the school's inclusive practices result in pupils not being disadvantaged by gender, race or ability.

### **Sixth form**

30. Provision in the sixth form is currently under review, as a response to curriculum change in Years 10 and 11 and the imminent change in funding for post 16 provision in schools. A little under half of Year 11 enter the sixth form from a GCSE based curriculum in which Business Studies is the only pre-vocational provision. Nearly a quarter of Year 11 enter other further education. Currently, the school offers a mainly AS and A level sixth form curriculum in at least 22 subjects. A few subjects attract small numbers, but their continuation is funded through larger groups in other subjects. Only two AVCE courses are now available (Travel & Tourism and Leisure and Recreation), all that remains of a significantly larger provision of vocational courses which failed to attract sufficient students. Thus, opportunities for some students is restricted as those seeking vocational provision now mainly attend Stamford College. There are no formal college links, and the only school links come through participation in local authority-supported orchestras, through an Oxbridge entrant conference which the school hosts and through AVCE events to which other schools are invited, one of which was taking place during the week of the inspection. A significant omission is the fact that statutory requirements for religious education are not met, as there is no timetabled provision.
31. Small numbers have the opportunity to retake GCSE English and Mathematics in the Autumn Term of Year 12. All students take General Studies in addition to four AS in Year 12 and three A levels in Year 13. All students in Year 12 also take Key Skills but Application of Number is not available. ICT

has been available for two years and Communications has just been introduced. There is a discrete lesson for each, plus variable support within subjects. There is a systematic programme of personal and social education within which some careers provision is made. About 11 per cent of students take part in Young Enterprise activities.

32. A strength in the overall provision is the opportunity for Year 12 to support both personal and social education and Tuesday + provision in the main school. Sixth formers also provide a mentoring scheme for younger pupils, act as guides for prospective parents visiting the school and participate in a range of charity work, drama productions, voluntary activities in the community and the sixth form and school councils.
33. Provision to support independent learning is made via a three-day induction to the sixth form at the end of Year 11 and as part of a residential team-building experience early in Year 12. Study skills support is also given within subjects. There is provision for private study within the sixth form area of the school. This contains limited ICT access but students can also work sometimes in the computer suites or in the library, all of which are adjacent to the sixth form common room. A handbook is being prepared for the small number of students who join the sixth form from other schools.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

34. The provision for pupils' and students' spiritual development is satisfactory, with satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. In art and design they have the opportunity to reflect, express personal ideas and deal sensitively with controversial issues, one outstanding example being anorexia. In music, the experience of developing spiritually through listening and creating their own music is well done. In religious education, the beliefs of different religions are well explored. In most other subjects there is little evidence of teacher planning, and spiritual matters arise by default, such as in drama, in the study of plays such as 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle'. In English there are many references to moral issues, but opportunities are missed to draw pupils out and deepen the moral and spiritual dimension of the learning. Assemblies have improved since the last inspection and they cover elements of moral, social and cultural development effectively. However, the requirements of a daily act of collective worship are not met and there has been no improvement since the last inspection. The thought for the day was read out in tutor groups, but in many instances was treated perfunctorily, as was mentioned in the previous report. Very few acts of collective worship were seen in tutor periods, thus failing to meet statutory requirements.
35. The provision for moral development is very good. The school's code of behaviour sets firm standards and high expectations of pupils' and students' conduct, which teachers are consistently reinforcing. In several subjects, pupils and students are given clear opportunities to exercise moral judgement. In Year 11 English, there were many moral and ethical issues arising from the poems of Edwin Muir, and pupils were comfortable and unselfconscious in referring to them. In written work, there were also many thoughtful, well-considered and sensitive pieces about the war in Afghanistan, and arising from the study of Anne Frank's diary. In geography, the consideration of issues surrounding overseas aid, especially where there are conditions attached, adds to moral awareness. Discussions in drama focus frequently on moral dilemmas. In modern foreign languages, history and religious education, teachers make clear reference to the moral implications of issues which arise from the courses, for example, pollution, genocide and racism. Pupils and students also support charities, which adds to their understanding of moral and ethical issues.
36. The provision for social education is good. Pupils relate well to each other and to their teachers in lessons, especially in the sixth form. They enjoy good social relationships, collaborate well in group and pair work, and are supportive of each other in class. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of personal skills, particularly presentational skills in history, transferable skills in music, and awareness of character and personal interaction through drama. In the sixth form especially, students show a high degree of independence and responsibility in the approach to their work. In religious education, social issues such as family units and communities form an important part of learning, as does the spread of urbanisation in geography.
37. The provision for cultural education is satisfactory. In art and design, experiences of a wide range of European and world art occur. The music of China, Africa, India and the Caribbean arises within

the Years 7-9 curriculum, and there is a very strong emphasis on different cultures in religious education. However, the emphasis is on western culture in most subjects, and there has been little progress since the previous inspection on providing opportunities to experience life in a multi-cultural society. The modern foreign languages department offers the opportunity to visit or have contact in Europe, but apart from third world and immigration issues in the sixth form, reference to Francophone countries in the courses are infrequent. The culture of Mozambique is a topic in Year 9 geography, but there is little study of multi-cultural Britain. In English, texts from other cultures are not a prominent feature in displays or in pupils' folders. A recent, and very successful, travel and tourism conference, organised by sixth form students at a country club, had rather embarrassingly overlooked the need to provide appropriate catering for Asian students. The thought for the day often uses quotations, which give a very western view of life, and may well conflict with that of other cultures. The opportunity to consider any conflict is missed, and no stimulus given to greater awareness of other fundamental viewpoints.

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

38. There has been an improvement in the procedure for assessment since the last inspection and overall it is now good, but there remain inconsistencies within this. A new system for assessment has recently been introduced which is concerned with making predictions about pupils' attainment using entry assessment data and updated annually with further assessment data. Pupils' achievements within teaching groups are compared with those predicted so that under or over achievement can be identified. Targets for the groups are set which incorporate a measure of challenge in order to raise achievement. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and moderated across teaching groups to provide updated assessment data, although this process is often not rigorous. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs are also identified. However, although there are targets set at the teaching group level, there is less clarity at the individual pupil level. Pupils are not always clear about their individual progress in relation to national curriculum levels or GCSE grades, because the marking of their work does not usually provide this.
39. The quality of recording and assessing the performance of pupils with special educational needs in withdrawal groups is good. Dialogue ensures that pupils are aware of their progress and targets and there is a consistent sequence of rewards. However, there is some inconsistency in the criteria used by staff to identify pupils for the Successmaker programme, and further inconsistency about the criteria used for ending the intervention. The Learning Support Department is implementing a number of changes which are beginning to have a positive impact. These initiatives are recent and relate to the appointment of a new special educational needs co-ordinator. One of these changes is to bring the annual review of statements into line with the reporting cycle in order to effect a more efficient use of time. However, the consequence of this is that there is a small number of pupils whose statement review is overdue and so statutory requirements are not fully met. Additional staffing is in place, but a recent audit has shown that pupils with statements do not always receive their full allocation of time. This is further affected by the learning support assistants who are trained first aiders being called away from statemented pupils when they are needed. There is an effective interface between pastoral and special educational needs staff which facilitates information exchange and a consistent approach to pupils with both learning and behavioural difficulties.
40. This interface is also present within the overall monitoring of pupils' personal development, and pastoral year staff operate well. Procedures for monitoring personal development are good. There is very good support and guidance to raise their level of achievement. The pupils are well known by the staff and the high quality of relationships is a notable strength. There are high expectations of the standards of behaviour of pupils and these are clearly conveyed to them as part of their induction. The behaviour policy is well understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff throughout the school. The effectiveness of this policy, which includes sanctions and rewards, combined with the very good relationships and response of pupils, has a positive effect on both learning and levels of achievement. Whilst bullying or other oppressive behaviour is not a significant problem, the school is rigorous in resolving problems. Procedures to record, monitor and promote attendance are satisfactory. The shortcoming is visible in the inconsistency with which tutors operate and this is recognised by the school with effective planning for the next academic year.

41. There are satisfactory liaison arrangements with outside agencies to support a wide range of issues such as speech therapy and educational psychologists. Child protection is effectively organised, as are arrangements for first aid. The management of health and safety is satisfactory but there are some shortcomings in ensuring that all risk assessments are duly carried out in physical education and in design technology. A wide range of appropriate policies has been adopted by the governors for areas such as behaviour, assessment and personal development. These ensure that there is effective provision for the personal development through the PSE programme and Tuesday +. The school is inclusive in its work and seeks to ensure that those pupils who join the school other than at the age of 11 are provided with good support and full induction to ensure that they may quickly become part of the school community.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

42. The systems for assessing attainment in Years 12 and 13 are good. Pupils' work is assessed regularly using clear criteria which are closely tied to those used in public examinations. There is good dialogue between teachers and pupils about targets for improving attainment. The management has developed an assessment database which contains raw student targets for AS and A2 levels. A further development is under way to incorporate GCSE data to measure performance against prior attainment.

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

43. Students express particularly positive views about the accessibility of teachers to provide help, the quality and challenge of the teaching, the support which they receive to help them study independently and the support which the school provided to help them settle into the sixth form. In the responses to the questionnaire, a significant minority express some concerns about the advice which they receive about future options, the response of the school to the views of the sixth form, the information which they are given about their progress and the way in which they are treated as young adults. Inspectors' judgements supported the positive views of students and, whilst finding that the provision for advice about future options is satisfactory, judged that it is not always sufficiently proactive and, as a consequence, some students are not receiving the advice which could support them in making informed decisions about what to do after leaving the sixth form. Inspectors judged that the school generally responds satisfactorily to the views of the sixth form but that, on occasions, communication with students is not sufficiently clear to ensure that information has been given and understood and that students feel valued for their views.
44. Key Skills was introduced in 2000 with a discrete period of information and communication technology, adding communication in a similar way in 2001. There is also a facility for students to gain accreditation through subjects, but at present this is not widespread, as it is up to the students themselves to seek it, and many are not aware of the opportunities. No formal system exists for the accreditation of application of number. The systems supporting student progression into higher education are good, with tight deadlines governing the completion of application forms. Progression into employment or training is less rigorous, but is supported by talks and conventions. An adequate careers library and support from the careers service aid student research. Opportunities exist for work experience placements, which are effective and well supported.
45. Students in the sixth form involve themselves with main school pupils mainly through a mentoring initiative, in which a Year 12 student will support a Year 7 pupil, usually a more able or gifted and talented pupil, for two years. Other students are involved in backstage activities with drama groups, collecting money for charity events, refereeing lower school sports matches, delivering aspects of citizenship, and in Young Enterprise groups. Apart from their own sixth form council, students are represented on the school council.

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

46. There is a generally effective partnership with parents. The partnership is reinforced through very good information about the life and work of the school and a school-home agreement which has been completed and returned by the significant majority of parents or carers. General information

for parents through the prospectus and governors' annual report is well presented, informative and meets requirements. As appropriate, additional information regarding subject choices is given at information evenings, adding to the effectiveness of the links.

47. A minority of parents and carers attended the pre-inspection meeting and there was a good return rate to the questionnaire. The views expressed were generally positive. Parents and carers consider that their children like school. They are particularly pleased with the progress which pupils and students make, the high expectations, children's attitudes to school, the ease with which they feel that they can approach the school with any questions or concerns, and the quality of leadership and management. Parents and carers did indicate that they would like improvements in the arrangements for homework, the information which they receive about their child's progress, and for the school to work more closely with them. Inspectors support the positive views of parents and carers. Inspectors also found that the range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to enrich the curriculum offered to pupils and students is good. However, the inspection team judged that the information provided to parents and carers about pupils' and students' progress is satisfactory, but that there is some inconsistency in the setting of homework, although good practice exists. No clear judgements could be reached to state that the school does not attempt to work with its parents and carers.
48. The Learning Support Department has strong links with parents of pupils with special educational needs and steps are being taken to develop them further. Parents are provided with reports three times a year on those pupils who are using Successmaker. Increasingly, parents of pupils with special educational needs are being encouraged to contact the department if they have concerns and are expected to attend meetings to review their children's progress. Parents and carers generally support pupils in their work at school and at home and in their wider activities, although their use of the homework diary is inconsistent. Parents provide assistance at, and support very well, a wide range of school events, for example, school productions, consultation evening and information evenings. They are responsive to activities set up for social events and fund raising to support school activities. The support of parents is much valued by pupils and staff and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning.

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

49. There is a very good educational vision which is well shared by the governors, headteacher and staff. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership and the future development of the school is well shown within the overall planning. The key to much of the development is the approach to performance management, which is well established through effective target setting, from those set for the headteacher through to teaching staff. The headteacher's targets are reflected in the overall strategic improvement plan, which is comprehensive and provides a clear structure for developments. Line management is structured such that senior staff all have links with individual teachers to set and support achievement of the targets. The members of the leadership group have responsibility for whole-school initiatives through working groups and as soon as they have been delegated to heads of subjects and other middle managers, the senior staff take responsibility for the next initiative. This gives good impetus to change and improvement. For example, addressing shortcomings in the roles of tutors is to be the next target in performance management. Overall, the school has the potential to reach its ultimate aim of being a centre of excellence for learning and personal development.
50. Leadership and management at subject levels and for whole-school responsibilities are good overall, although there are some areas where there is insufficient rigour, for example, in line management for performing studies, in the quality of monitoring and evaluation of teaching, by both senior staff and subject leaders, and in the work of tutors. The Learning Support Department is very well led by a knowledgeable, thoughtful and methodical special needs co-ordinator who has a clear view of where the department is heading. She has taken some difficult decisions, which are planned to improve special educational needs provision in the school. Rigorous monitoring of the changes made against targets set is in place.
51. Good work has been done since the last inspection in 1996. Standards have risen overall and faster than the national trend. The quality of teaching has been significantly improved. The review of procedures for assessment has been good, and is developing the cohesive use of target setting for

pupils and students and as a whole-school approach to performance management. Improvement in marking has been satisfactory but is still inconsistent. Provision for the more able has been much improved but there is still inconsistency in the support for pupils with learning difficulties. The school recognises this and is taking appropriate action. The whole-school development planning and use of resources are now good and improvement in the co-ordination of information and communication technology is satisfactory. There is a good level of understanding in the school for future developments and the capacity for improvement is good.

52. Governors are very well involved through an effective partnership with the headteacher and leadership group. They have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses and use their committee structure to fulfil their roles. They monitor effectively and draw upon a wide range of sources to ensure that their decision making is well informed. Statutory duties are not fulfilled with regard to a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in the sixth form. The financial administration and application of best value are good. Governors monitor spending effectively, and contrast and compare the school very well. Specific grants for special educational needs and for initiatives are well spent. The analysis of performance enables the targeting for improvement and this is being well done although the school recognises that it can improve it still further. The outcomes are well used, reflecting the rigour of the headteacher and governors. Taking account of the standards being achieved, the quality of teaching and the overall positive learning ethos of the school, it is giving good value for money, and the sixth form provision is cost effective and adequate.
53. There are sufficient experienced and qualified staff to meet the needs of the curriculum and the pupils and students. Accommodation is satisfactory and the school benefits from many good classrooms and facilities, including a library resource centre. Facilities for sports are good. There are some shortcomings in science and design and technology, and the main hall is small and places limitations on whole-school activities. Resources are generally good and whilst there has been sound progress in developing computer resources, access to them poses some limitations and impacts on standards. Good use is made of new technology in many ways, including teaching, assessment analysis and administration.

## **Sixth form**

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

54. Many aspects reflect the overall picture of school leadership outlined above. Leadership and management are good. Induction of Year 11 pupils for recruitment into the sixth form is good. A very detailed brochure lists all the procedures of entry into post-16 courses. There is a strict entry requirement for acceptance into Year 12, and only in very exceptional circumstances are these requirements relaxed. Recruitment presently stands at about half of a Year 11 cohort. Other students take advantage of modern apprenticeships, or go elsewhere for a particular combination, or for vocational courses. Retention is good, and drop-out rates during Year 12 have decreased with the introduction of the AS level examinations, as students can now leave at the age of 17 with a qualification. Opportunities to follow vocational courses in school are limited. The management team do, however, ensure that full information is given to students about vocational opportunities locally, mainly through talks and conventions. There is an effective tutor system but opportunities to extend support and guidance are recognised and being planned for.

### ***Resources***

55. The resources for the sixth form are included in judgements above for the rest of the school. Accommodation for private study is limited, as is the access to computers. Overall, resources and accommodation are well used.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to continue the development of this good school by improving the overall management so that:

- i. the quality of marking and the use of assessment are consistently used to help support pupils' progress;

*(Paragraphs: 19, 38, 42, 51, 61, 83, 89, 96, 97, 107, 117, 133, 136, 180, 186)*

- ii. the use of information and communication technology is enhanced through:

- more effective planning in schemes of work;
- improved systems for departments to access resources; and
- further extending resources;

*(Paragraphs: 4, 44, 51, 53, 71, 78, 84, 91, 94, 97, 107, 124, 144, 193, 204)*

- iii. the provision for pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural development is enhanced by:

- extending the roles of tutors in their use of 'Thought for the day'; and
- better planning in subjects so that opportunities are not missed;

*(Paragraphs: 34, 37)*

- iv. the statutory requirements are met for :

- annual reviews of statements for pupils with special educational needs;
- a daily act of collective worship; and
- the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

*(Paragraphs: 34, 39, 52)*

### Sixth form

- i. Improve the overall:

- quality of provision for support and guidance;
- quality of accommodation, especially for private study and independent learning; and
- access to computers to enhance opportunities to use information and communication technology.

*(Paragraphs: 33, 43, 44, 55)*

- ii. In relation to learning opportunities:

- address the shortcomings in management of performing studies; and
- widen the opportunities for vocational education.

*(Paragraphs 7, 30, 50, 176-181)*

- iii. Statutory requirements as listed above for the main school.

Minor issues for improvement are:

- the partnership between teachers and learning support staff and their deployment;
- the systematic teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum;
- the quality of investigational skills in science;
- application of risk assessments in physical education and in design and technology.

*(Paragraphs 4, 20, 65, 51, 78, 97, 100, 128, 137)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	143
	Sixth form	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		45

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7-11</b>							
Number	5	33	71	30	4	0	0
Percentage	3	23	50	21	3	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	1	14	31	12	0	0	0
Percentage	2	24	57	22	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1102	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	33	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	31	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.7
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	110	119	229

<i>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</i>		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	84	93	95
	Girls	110	103	105
	Total	194	196	200
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	85 (50)	86 (76)	87 (75)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	48 (17)	54 (5)	45 (32)
	National	31 (28)	43 (52)	34 (30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	75	90	89
	Girls	105	100	105
	Total	180	190	194
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (79)	83 (64)	85 (71)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	27 (39)	50 (51)	50 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	105	113	218

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	63	103	103
	Girls	77	111	112
	Total	140	214	215
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	64 (65)	98 (97)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.2
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations:

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	
		Male	Female
School	Number of candidates	34	40
	Average point score per candidate	18.4	14.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	31	37	68
	Average point score per candidate	18.8	13.9	16.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	5
White	1,243
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	4
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

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

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	531

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	24.9
Key Stage 4	22.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	3,341,380
Total expenditure	3,346,830
Expenditure per pupil	2,676
Balance brought forward from previous year	103,720
Balance carried forward to next year	98,270

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3.3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,292
Number of questionnaires returned	428

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	58	10	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	57	2	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	64	9	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	54	23	4	2
The teaching is good.	21	70	5	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	53	24	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	50	10	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	48	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	19	56	18	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	30	53	7	2	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	63	6	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	49	8	2	9

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

There was a good return to the pre-inspection questionnaire, but only a small minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors firmly agree with all of the points that please parents most. Reports comply with statutory requirements and give appropriate information, although they sometimes lack specific targets. There is some variation in homework but overall it does extend pupils' and students' learning. Standards of behaviour of a minority of pupils do let the school down.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Standards have risen since the last inspection and there is an improving trend over time.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis from Year 7, and they develop these skills well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Raising achievement in Years 10 and 11, by focusing on improving teaching by using the good practice currently in place in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Ensuring that pupils' work is assessed consistently across the department so that all pupils know the level at which they are achieving and what they need to do to improve.

56. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001, results were well above average, and in line with results in similar schools. The number of pupils gaining the higher levels was average. Results were better than mathematics but not as good as science. The results in 2001 were much better than those in 2000, which was a year in which results dropped an unusual amount. This reflected shortcomings within the department which have been remedied through effective management. Apart from 2000, there has been a rising trend in attainment over time. When pupils come into the school, their attainment levels in English are in line with the average, and results show that they achieve well during their first three years. The attainment gap between boys and girls is narrower than that found nationally. GCSE results have risen over time. At A\* to C in English in 2001, results were above average, and English literature results significantly improved. Girls achieve better than boys, but by a slightly narrower margin than that found nationally. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results in both English and literature represent satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.
57. Standards of work seen by 14 year-olds during the inspection were well above the national average. Higher-attaining pupils, by the end of Year 9, write detailed, technically accurate pieces. They can adapt their writing effectively for different situations and readers, and they learn to do this from Year 7. For example, some very thoughtful writing on the war against Afghanistan was written by Year 7 pupils, and extended, confident writing on the subject of abolishing Christmas by a Year 8 pupil. They are introduced to the skills of literary analysis early in the school. Some interesting work on William Blake's poetry by Year 7 pupils shows that they could quote effectively from a poem to support their ideas. Lower-attaining pupils develop their capability to write for different readers and purposes, although their writing lacks detail and, sometimes, technical accuracy. They make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. The majority of pupils express their ideas orally confidently in informal situations, and are also good at speaking in more formal situations.
58. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are generally above the national average. Highest-attaining pupils learn how to employ skills of literary analysis skilfully, and they write extended pieces accurately, in a lively and imaginative way. They can use textual quotations well and their enjoyment of the subject shines through their writing. They use technical vocabulary to deconstruct text and can recognise literary devices such as Chaucer's use of irony in The Prologue to 'The Canterbury Tales'. Middle-attaining pupils generally write accurately and use a good range of vocabulary appropriately. Lower-attaining pupils write less detailed pieces, and whilst understanding straightforward aspects of texts, they sometimes miss underlying features. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average. They can adapt their speaking for different situations and audiences successfully and use a reasonably wide range of vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with others, from entering the school until they are 16.
59. Teaching and learning overall are good, although stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 was almost always good or better, with two thirds being very good or

excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in any year. Particular strengths include the teachers' very good knowledge of their subject, the appropriately high level of challenge and expectations of what pupils can do, and the way that they 'model' good answers, by showing examples of how to write or analyse in a particular way. Where teaching is very good or excellent, teachers maximise the time available in lessons by maintaining a brisk pace and by planning a range of activities to keep pupils interested and motivated. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, they were examining a scene from 'Twelfth Night' in depth. The teacher's excellent questioning, the use of time in the lesson and the modelling of the work using an overhead projector all helped pupils to think really hard about the characters and themes in the play. In a Year 8 lesson seen in a computer room, pupils made very good gains in learning how to produce a presentation using text and graphical images. The teacher demonstrated the skills that he wanted them to use and explained very clearly what they needed to do in order to achieve at a particular level. The careful teaching and planning, together with pupils' positive attitudes, contributed to very good learning. One area for development for the department is to consider ways of extending the pace and level of challenge seen in the first three years to Years 10 and 11. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English do well.

60. Pupils have very good attitudes in lessons and behave very well. On the whole, they enjoy the subject and are keen to do well. They volunteer answers to questions, and when they get the opportunity, they work together (in pairs, groups and as the whole class) very well. For example, in a Year 11 lesson seen, pupils were presenting their ideas to the class on Edwin Morgan's sequence of poems, 'Stubhill'. They all took the task seriously. They rose to the challenge of using formal language, tone and register, and the 'audience' listened extremely well.
61. The department uses assessment data well to monitor how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. They enter into a dialogue with them, acknowledge good work and identify areas for improvement. Targets are set and pupils are encouraged to reflect on how well they have done. The department has good information for pupils and parents about assessment. There are descriptions of National Curriculum levels and an explanation about how these relate to the school's system of numerical grades which is complex and does not easily lend itself to translating into National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Some teachers indicate the National Curriculum level achieved as well as the numerical grade but practice is inconsistent.
62. The department is well led and managed. It is a large department in which staff function well as a team and are keen to support one another and develop good practice. The head of department has an analytical, reflective approach to assessing how well pupils are doing and in highlighting what needs to be done to raise standards. Performance data is being used well to set targets, and this continues to be a developing area. There is a systematic programme in place for monitoring teaching, and teachers regularly observe one another. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning as teachers reflect well on how different groups of pupils do and consider ways of improving what they provide in order to be inclusive. Nevertheless, further development of this practice is required.
63. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen, the quality of teaching has improved and teaching plans have been written to accommodate curriculum changes. Pupils who are particularly gifted are now identified, and opportunities for them to achieve their potential are sometimes indicated in lesson plans. There are no specific measures to enrich the curriculum in English for them. The department is effectively adopting the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy and practice is beginning to spread across the school. The use of computers is developing but there is the need to increase opportunities. The department is well placed to develop further.

### **Literacy across the curriculum**

64. In all subjects, pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking in formal situations are above average. Some subjects actively promote different writing skills, such as the development of essay writing, note-taking, articles and creative writing. Whilst teachers of English play the major role in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject-specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. In art lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and write about artists' works in a range of styles. The geography department plans for pupils to write in a variety of styles, such as taking



notes, writing reports and extended essays and in design and technology, pupils get opportunities to talk in pairs and groups as well as to discuss with the whole class. In religious education lessons, there are also times when pupils write descriptively and creatively and sometimes imagine what it would be like to be someone else.

65. The school has looked at ways to develop literacy across the curriculum, and has recommended procedures, such as the display of specialist key words in classrooms, which departments are meant to follow. Practice is not yet consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically.

## MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 are above average.
- The majority of teaching is good.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to obtain extra help and guidance during regular extra-curricular sessions.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that the highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 are achieving to their potential.

66. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are just above average. At the end of Year 9, standards are well above the national average. This represents good progress. In 2001, the results achieved in the national tests for 14-year-olds were well above the national averages at all levels. When compared with those achieved in schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds, they were above average overall, but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was below average. Results were better than in English but below those in science. At the end of Year 11, results in GCSE examinations for grades A\* to C are well above the national average, and at A\* to G, they are above average. The percentage of pupils achieving the highest grades A\* and A is well above the national figure. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment at the end of Year 11 is contrary to the difference nationally as boys are outperforming girls. Teachers take care in selecting pupils to answer questions, to ensure that all participate, and both boys and girls often think carefully before responding, and give reasoned answers.
67. In most classes in Years 7 to 9, standards of numeracy are above average. This is because the majority of lessons begin with a well-planned mental mathematical exercise, designed to revise previous work and to help pupils learn new skills. During these sessions, pupils are thinking about mathematics, not just performing mechanical operations. A good example occurred in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils were quickly engaged in an exercise where they were required to evaluate mentally quite complex percentage changes in quantities, both increase and decrease. A tight timescale ensured that they all worked at a fast pace. Most pupils achieved considerable success, being confident in what they were doing, and a few offered alternative methods of obtaining answers, often indicating an unexpected breadth of thinking. There was a buzz of enjoyment and excitement that helped ensure that during the rest of the lesson pupils effectively learned more mathematics.
68. Standards of attainment in other aspects of mathematics, by the end of Year 9, are above average overall, and represent good progress and achievement for most pupils. Gifted and talented pupils, and other higher-attaining pupils, in particular, are achieving well-above-average standards, because of good teaching. Even so, a few of the most gifted pupils are not achieving the highest possible standards of which they are capable. A very good example of pupils being challenged to produce the highest standards occurred in a voluntary class of pupils from Years 8 and 9, where they were coping well with GCSE standard tasks. They handled algebraic expansions and factorisations confidently and, with little help from their teacher, 'discovered' the rules for multiplying and dividing powers of terms, even questioning him about negative indices. Many of these pupils also found the fallacy contained within an apparent proof that showed one equals two! Most pupils,

of all levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs, do well. Good use of an interactive computerised independent learning program is effective in providing extra support for slower learners. Under good supervision, this learning system enables pupils to make progress in improving and consolidating a wide range of mathematical skills at rates appropriate to their prior attainment. Its use is doing much to improve pupils' confidence and competence in the subject. Because most pupils are good at mental arithmetic, they make appropriate use of calculators, but a few pupils, for example, in lower sets, find simple calculations problematic and need the support of calculators.

69. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the national average, and represents continued good progress from Year 9 to Year 11. Most pupils attend regularly and produce a good amount of work, most of which is sufficiently challenging to move them forward at a pace commensurate with their prior attainment. Higher-attaining pupils often confidently complete a variety of tasks across all attainment targets, including combined aspects of trigonometry and geometry, the production of good GCSE coursework and a range of algebraic functions. A particularly good example of high quality work took place in a Year 11 top set where pupils were introduced to the notion of standard deviation. In a very short time, all members of the class understood how to perform basic calculations and, following some very searching questions asked of the teacher, they appreciated how and when to use the indicator, and its application in real-life situations. Following this, after a very short discussion, they confidently and accurately applied their newly-acquired knowledge and skills to more demanding situations that demanded diverse thinking rather than repetition of procedures. Likewise, many other pupils work well and make appropriate progress. For example, in a Year 11 set of average and below-average pupils considering the use of Pythagoras' theorem, considerable success was achieved in a short time, with correct algebraic and arithmetic operations being completed in a range of contexts.
70. Pupils' good achievement comes about through predominantly good teaching. A major strength of the good teaching, as seen in many lessons, occurs when teachers prepare and present work to pupils that is well matched to their prior attainment, even within a set of similarly talented pupils. On occasions, within such sets, three levels of work were available to support or extend pupils, as appropriate. Teachers take care in selecting pupils to answer questions, to ensure that all participate, and both boys and girls often think carefully before responding, and give reasoned answers. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress throughout both key stages. The progress and achievement of pupils with English as an additional language are also good. They are taught well and in-class support is used effectively to help individuals achieve their potential. Most teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This allows them to prepare challenging work for pupils, well matched to their prior attainment, and to be confident when dealing with queries. In many cases, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour. Such expectations result in brisk lessons in which pupils enjoy their learning and remain focused on the tasks in hand. Consequently, pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding, work hard and produce good results. Such was the case in a Year 7 class of low-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. The pupils were quickly challenged to recall and apply their knowledge of the relationships between various metric measurements, engaging their attention and co-operation immediately, and they responded positively, demonstrating attainment beyond expectations. On the whole, pupils made considerable progress in the lesson, enjoyed what they were doing and achieved well. The teacher's lively and enthusiastic attitude, along with good relationship with the pupils, did much to make this a very successful lesson.
71. In the few instances where teaching has shortcomings, ineffective class management leads to pupils becoming inattentive and thus they underachieve. In addition, the teacher tends to dominate the lesson, giving pupils too few chances to respond to challenging questions, and there is unsatisfactory recall of anything other than the most previous work. Although information and communication technology is used to develop pupils' skills in a number of mathematical aspects, its use is still underdeveloped overall, mainly through lack of access to facilities.
72. Relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves, are generally good, and most lessons are conducted in an environment of mutual respect. This allows pupils to focus upon their work, and encourages them to ask and answer questions without fear of ridicule for doing so. Teachers use praise for good work effectively, and this helps pupils make even more effort to

succeed. They give freely of their own time at lunchtimes and after school to help pupils with aspects of work that they find difficult. Pupils who take advantage of these facilities value such extra help and it enables them to achieve well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. In many cases pupils show a pride in their work, organise and present it well, and are keen to explain what they have learned. Such attitudes, along with their predominantly good behaviour, allow pupils to make progress and to learn well. Most pupils are attentive, respond well to questions and appear to enjoy what they are doing.

73. The department is very well led and managed by the acting head of department, who has only been in post since January. A good team spirit is evident and this, along with a willingness to share good practice, has led to improvements in teaching and learning, to the benefit of all pupils, in an already successful department. Good planning ensures that all pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity, special needs or prior attainment, receive good opportunities to achieve well in the subject. The good accommodation and resources available all contribute to providing a very good learning environment for pupils. Well-organised assessment procedures provide full information about pupils' curriculum coverage, attainment and progress in meeting targets. This information is well used to inform curriculum planning, and teaching and learning strategies.
74. On balance, very good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Average pupils in Years 10 and 11 are no longer underachieving and nearly all pupils in these years are well challenged by their work. Progress in Years 7 to 9 has improved greatly and pupils with special educational needs are now well taught. The proportion of unsatisfactory aspects of teaching is greatly reduced and pupils' progress is well monitored. Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, but occasionally it is still cursory and uninformative. Nevertheless, many pupils receive good verbal feedback on performance during lessons.

#### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

75. The mathematics department has incorporated the national numeracy strategy within its schemes of work. Hence all pupils benefit from its content and teaching styles. Additionally, the department provides regular numeracy challenges within the school's pastoral programme to extend pupils' mathematical thinking skills, and these tasks are well received by pupils. Basic skills lessons supplement mathematics lessons in reinforcing the underlying skills required to handle numbers confidently and at speed. Led by the acting head of the mathematics department, a whole school numeracy policy has been developed that recognises the uses of numeracy in all other areas of the curriculum and provides a good framework for consistent application of mathematics across the school. Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Many pupils are given opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of different and relevant contexts. In design and technology, pupils make measurements within given tolerances, make models to scale, cost materials and ingredients and often draw graphs to display data. In geography, pupils analyse and represent data effectively. In science, pupils use line and bar graphs, measure volume, time, angles and temperature, and they make accurate calculations using these measurements. Business studies also make full use of a range of mathematical skills and concepts. These include averages, percentages, profit and loss taxation and sales revenues. Most pupils cope well, but lower-attaining pupils tend to make mistakes with aspects of these applications. In this area, the school is determined to improve and has the capacity and the will to do so.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision for science is **good**.

### Strengths

- Attainment in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The learning program for pupils Years 7 and 8.

### Areas for improvement

- Challenge in the work for higher attainers, and investigations.
- The use of ICT, and in particular data logging, to support teaching and learning.
- The quality of marking and the guidance given to pupils on what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Better monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to raise standards further.

76. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were well above the national average and above average compared to similar schools. In the past few years, girls have achieved better results than boys at this stage. Following the last inspection, and until 1999, results improved steadily, but were better than the national average. Since then the results have improved at a faster rate, whilst bettering the national average at expected and higher levels for pupils' age. Results in science were better than those in English and mathematics.
77. GCSE results in 2001 were above the national average for all schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher A\* to C grades was above the national average. However, when compared with similar schools, these results are below the national average. Boys' performance was better than that for girls, which was against the national trend. Pupils do less well in science than they do in most of their other subjects and this compares unfavourably with the national picture.
78. In Years 7-9, standards are above those expected nationally, although not quite as good as those indicated by pupils' results in the national tests in 2001. In spite of grouping arrangements by attainment, there is a broad range of attainment in each class. In many lessons, expectations of achievement are set at the upper-middle to lower level, so that higher-attaining pupils are not being sufficiently stretched. Pupils generally make good gains in knowledge and understanding and in communicating scientific observations. By the end of Year 9, most pupils know that sound is made by vibrations, though few can explain sound vibrations in terms of the movement of particles of air. They understand that sound travels in the form of waves, and can explain in simple terms the difference between amplitude and frequency. Higher-attaining pupils do not have the depth of knowledge required to achieve the highest levels. Most pupils have a good knowledge of the human reproductive process, can explain the changes at puberty for both sexes, and use appropriate terminology to describe the menstrual cycle in females. Practical skills are good, and pupils can draw conclusions that are consistent with the evidence gained, and explain these in terms of their scientific knowledge and understanding. Investigative skills, such as making predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding, and their evaluation of their work, are less well developed. This is a consequence of there being too few opportunities for them to make their own predictions, define problems based on scientific knowledge and understanding, or plan their own investigations. Most lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactory and often good standards. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Although teachers help pupils to develop their literacy skills by giving them confidence in using basic scientific terminology and in developing writing skills to improve science learning, this is not done rigorously enough. Pupils' numeracy skills are generally good overall. Their computer skills, although improving, are not well developed because of the lack of opportunity to use computers, particularly for data-logging. Overall, by the end of Year 9, pupils' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment in the subject, which, when they join the school as 11-year-olds, is broadly in line with the national average.
79. Standards in Years 10 to 11 are above average, being similar to those suggested by the results in 2001 examinations. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory at this stage. The current Year 10 are achieving slightly better than Year 11, who were affected by staffing problems prior to September 2001, which led to weaknesses in the quality of teaching which pupils received at that time. The

difficulties have not as yet been totally resolved. Another factor that restricts pupils' progress is inadequate planning by some teachers that provide too few opportunities for pupils to think for themselves, and to relate their science to everyday application. Where teaching is good, pupils learn well. For example, many pupils in a top set in Year 10 showed a good understanding of how unbalanced forces change the speed or direction of objects. They could explain why an inflated balloon with its neck open flies off in the opposite direction to that of the escaping air, and effectively use this knowledge to explain the principle of rocket propulsion, and how the gain of momentum of a rocket is equal and opposite to the momentum of the hot gases being ejected. In a lower-attaining Year 11 class, pupils made good progress in understanding the importance of homeostasis, the mechanism by which the body controls its internal environment. Most could explain how humans maintain a constant body temperature and how the amount of water in the blood is controlled by the kidneys. Higher-attaining pupils know that the water balance produced by the kidneys is under the control of the brain and are beginning to understand the feedback mechanisms which operate this aspect of homeostasis. There is still too little independent investigative work and opportunities for pupils to suggest their own hypotheses and experiments are often missed. The majority of pupils understand fair testing principles and know that sensible predictions should be based on scientific knowledge but, again, few plan their own work. Pupils at all levels of attainment can tabulate results, although often, too much guidance is given as to their construction. This was not the case, however, in one lesson seen, where teaching was very good. Pupils were asked to draw a table and suggest headings, based on the data they needed to acquire to draw a distance/time graph. Pupils generally have good graphical skills and where necessary use word and symbolic equations. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. They benefit from being in relatively small teaching groups and from the good support they receive from learning support assistants. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress as a result of close care and attention by subject staff.

80. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, and most of them concentrate well. Behaviour is mostly good. The majority of pupils respond well to their lessons, are co-operative with their teachers and help each other. Pupils share equipment safely and happily record their observations together. They answer teachers in a courteous manner and to the best of their ability. Few pupils ask questions to enquire more deeply into a topic, an attribute that needs to be fostered in order to raise standards in science.
81. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and are good overall. The proportion of good teaching has increased and it occurred in half of the lessons observed, with a small amount of very good teaching. Only very rarely is teaching unsatisfactory, but inconsistency in teaching quality does produce marked differences in the pupils' responses. In the best lessons, the teachers' infectious enthusiasm, subject expertise, thorough planning and high expectations are reflected in a brisk pace that challenges the pupils and raises their sights. For example, this happened in a lesson where pupils were investigating the relationship between speed, distance and time. The teacher was aware of the needs of all the pupils and their levels of attainment. These formed part of the planning and structure of the work, which was very good, and the pace was quick so that learning was effective. The teacher's skilful application of the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy ensured that learning was with understanding. Specific pupils who had previously been identified as having weaknesses in graph plotting skills made good progress. Good use was made of a learning support assistant for a statemented pupil with learning and behavioural difficulties, enabling good progress to be made.
82. Teachers know their pupils well and recognise the importance of adapting their methods according to individual needs. Where teaching is less effective, teachers' practice is instructional, directed at the whole class, and there is insufficient attention given to meeting the differing needs of the pupils. In such lessons, teachers are usually clear and articulate, and provide interesting practical work to support the topic. They maintain a directive style throughout the lesson, asking questions and providing the answers when pupils struggle to respond. Pupils have little opportunity to discuss significant issues, highlight important points, feedback their views, plan their own experiments and make their own notes. The lessons are successful, but pupils are too passive. Opportunities are lost to really challenge pupils and make them think. While this more directive approach is frequently effective in conveying information, it reduces opportunities for pupils to take initiative, think for themselves and solve problems. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is not well prepared and a

narrow range of dull resources are chosen. Time is wasted in trying to control various members of the class, pace lacks urgency and insufficient learning takes place.

83. The department is effectively led and well managed. Significant changes and improvements have taken place over the past few years, which are now being reflected, in improved attainment. A good team ethos prevails and there is a clear commitment to further improvements. The department has worked hard to produce very good quality schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 and a good scheme for Year 10. A good start has been made in compiling information about students' assessments as a means of establishing targets for raising standards. Marking of pupils' work is generally at least satisfactory, but the link between grades, relative performance and their use to establish short-term individual targets is not focused enough so that under achievement is more speedily identified and rectified. There is also a need to correct pupils' spelling, and to check that instructions to complete corrections or to catch up on missing work have been carried out. The teaching of pupils who are gifted and talented has improved and is now good, overall. However, in some classes, some higher-attaining pupils are not doing as well as they should because they are not being sufficiently stretched.
84. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are in place, but need to be further developed and more rigorously applied, so that all staff and pupils know where their weaknesses lie and how improvement can be made. The development of information and communication technology is moving at a fast pace, but the lack of equipment still hinders progress. The day-to-day management of the department runs smoothly, assisted by an effective team of technicians. Accommodation is satisfactory but one laboratory is too small for effective practical work for the large class sizes using it, and a small percentage of lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms, restricting the range of practical activities which can be attempted by these classes. The department has addressed most of the issues raised in the last inspection, coping well in difficult accommodation, and has made good improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good achievement and above-average examination results.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to think and to act independently.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 to ensure continuity and progression.
- Assessment and day-to-day marking.
- Planning to meet the differing needs of pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to make more use of information and communication technology.

85. Teachers' assessments in 2001 at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards for the current Year 9 are above average and that teacher assessments were slightly generous. GCSE results for 2001 were above average at grades A\* to G, with all pupils obtaining a grade, and well above average for the proportion of pupils who obtained grades A\* to C.
86. Pupils' achievement is good. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is broadly average overall, and their prior experience and learning are varied. The sketchbook and class work of pupils in the first few weeks of Year 7 indicate that many have below-average standards. Their technical skills and their understanding of how to use the formal elements of art and design, such as line, tone and colour, and observation skills, are underdeveloped, and pupils lack confidence in handling tools and materials. They also know little about art from a variety of periods and cultures. These findings confirm the information which the teachers have gathered from a questionnaire and a diagnostic test which they give to Year 7 pupils in their first lessons. The results are then used to plan appropriate programmes of study. This is an example of good planning

by the teachers because it helps to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, and by the end of Year 9, standards have improved to above average. This is seen in well-observed and expressive observation drawings and in a more confident use of a range of two- and three-dimensional media. Pupils also learn about a wide variety of styles and ideas in art and they reflect their understanding of these in their own paintings, such as those by Year 8 pupils based on their studies of the German Expressionist artists.

87. The achievement of pupils who take up the GCSE course is also good. Pupils in Year 10 build well on their prior attainment because teachers place good emphasis on the reinforcement of subject skills, especially the importance of first-hand observation study. The large scale, well-observed, colourful and expressive drawings of peppers, linked to studies of the work of the artist Georgia O'Keefe, are good examples of attainment. By the end of Year 11, pupils have extended their learning and have become accomplished in a wide range of media. Their sketchbooks and preparatory studies show that they have a good understanding of how to research and investigate ideas and the outcomes of this are often adventurous and imaginative. Pupils in Year 11 also show that they can make their own decisions about the interpretation of themes, the selection of appropriate media and the scale of their work. This is seen in imaginative and carefully made ceramic sculptures and in other large-scale three-dimensional work such as that being constructed in wire and paper by a Year 11 pupil, based on her studies of giraffes. The opportunities which teachers provide for pupils to think and to act independently, and the encouragement they are given to be adventurous with their work, are other important factors which contribute to the good achievement. Pupils in Year 11 respond to these opportunities well; they work conscientiously, with genuine interest in the subject and with a desire to do well.
88. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good throughout Years 7 to 11. Lessons are well managed and orderly so that there is a good, productive working atmosphere in which pupils learn well and make good progress. Although no reference to individual education plans was seen for those pupils with special educational needs, teachers do use their knowledge of different pupils when they plan lessons and in their teaching methods. In one Year 9 lesson, for example, the teacher had altered his approach to the teaching of how to construct wire and paper sculptures so that the various steps were explained and supported with demonstrations. He also gave good individual attention to pupils which enabled some boys of lower attainment, and two with special educational needs, to have made good progress with their work by the end of the lesson. Teachers' planning for those pupils who are gifted and talented is less thorough. Although lesson tasks are planned so that all pupils can achieve well and pupils are encouraged to develop their work further and beyond the most obvious idea, not enough is done to identify and to include the particular needs of gifted and talented pupils and to provide additional, structured tasks which would enable them to fulfil their potential. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and this also has a positive impact on the way in which pupils learn. This is particularly the case in Year 11 where the good attitudes of pupils, their mature and sensible behaviour and their enthusiasm for the subject, which is engendered by the good teaching, make a significant contribution to their learning in lessons and to their good, overall achievement.
89. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. At the time of the inspection the department is temporarily led by an acting head of department, following the resignation of the permanent post holder at the end of the previous term. Although he is providing good support for his team, two of whom are newly-qualified teachers, and he has an exemplary approach to his responsibilities, the support and monitoring of the department, are insufficiently rigorous. There are no structured schemes of work for Years 10 and 11 and there is inadequate monitoring of the way in which teachers interpret the examination syllabus in their lessons in order to guarantee coherent progression and continuity in the pupils' work. Although the analysis and use of pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7 is a good feature of teachers' planning, the assessment and day-to-day marking of the work of these pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 is not consistent. Pupils are not always informed clearly enough about their progress and, most importantly, how they should improve. Assessment in Years 10 to 11 is better than in the previous years, and in Year 11 it is good. Pupils are aware of the standards they have achieved and they are given constructive, written advice about how to improve. There is frequent and systematic dialogue between teachers and individual pupils about how to achieve the targets which they have been set, and the use of assessment documents, which pupils keep with their work and to which both teachers and pupils refer when discussing targets, is a good feature of the teaching. Currently, however, these are prepared by individual teachers and although

the teachers who are responsible for the GCSE course work well together and use samples of pupils' work in order to standardise their marking against the examination criteria, there is not a sufficiently well co-ordinated approach to the use of assessment systems within the department.

90. The department makes good use of visits to galleries. Displays of pupils' work and reproductions of work by well-known artists enliven many of the schools' corridors and stairways and contribute well to pupils' cultural awareness, as do the sculptures which have been commissioned for some of the school's courtyards. Accommodation is adequate although it is necessary to pass through rooms in order to gain access to all of the teaching areas. One of these rooms is rather small for some classes to work easily on the larger scale work that is now a common feature of good practice in art and design. The department has some assistance from a technician but not from one who is able to assist with the work involved in ceramics. This means that teachers spend time on tasks which could be used more profitably on those which directly affect teaching and learning. Some rooms are not being maintained to the high standards which are required in order that there are no long-term, harmful effects from ceramic dust.
91. Improvement overall since the previous inspection is satisfactory and in some aspects it has been good. There is good emphasis on the study of a wider range of styles in art, although more use of non-European traditions could still be made. The use of display to support learning has been significantly improved and well-presented exemplar material is displayed throughout the department, as are key words from the subject vocabulary. Teaching overall is now consistently good and the improvement in standards in examination results has been maintained. Insufficient improvement has taken place in the pupils' use of information and communication technology. The department does not have its own computers and although there are opportunities within the schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9, these are not yet sufficiently well developed for them to learn enough about the application of the computer as a creative or research tool. In Years 10 and 11, there are some examples of research from the Internet, but there is little evidence in pupils' work that they employ processes such as using a digital camera and scanning and manipulating images in the planning and preparation of their ideas.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including those with special educational needs.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Leadership and management are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessment.
- The focus in planning for the use of computers.
- Risk assessment.

92. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed that pupils were achieving well above the national average. In 2001 GCSE examinations, results were above the national average. The results were better in food and textiles than in resistant materials, a reflection of the difference in performance between girls and boys and the prior attainment of some pupils. At the end of Year 11, pupils achieve the results expected for their prior attainment.
93. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Pupils are very enthusiastic and well motivated by the activities provided because learning is relevant and they are successful. They learn about a wide range of materials and they use a good range of small and large equipment competently and safely, for example, when making an electronic circuit for a badge in Year 9. They demonstrate good graphical skills in Year 8 when designing a display to promote a video. They are proud of new products they have developed in food technology lessons. Higher-achieving pupils plan their work and evaluate it objectively against specific criteria. Lower-achieving pupils carefully evaluate how well they have worked. Similar levels of attainment are achieved by boys and girls.



94. By the end of Year 11, standards are above those expected. Pupils have sufficient confidence, knowledge and understanding to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs and specifications. The higher-achieving students work well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. Pupils have opportunities to use information and communication technology, particularly to present their work but also when they are designing, although these opportunities are not always effectively planned. Pupils' design work and practical work shows progression in development and a satisfactory level of craftsmanship in its execution. The higher-achieving pupils critically analyse their work well. All pupils, regardless of ability or gender, achieve well because teachers expect them to learn well.
95. Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good overall. In lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge engage pupils. Their skilful handling of materials and equipment enables pupils to be successful. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and these are always good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and work sheets which can then be retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. The lessons are well structured and teachers' questioning is good. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and the good range of activities ensures that all students are actively involved in their learning. New knowledge is introduced as it is needed so that students can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In the best lessons, there is a collaborative approach to learning that encourages students to become curious and ask questions. The planning and purpose of the lesson are sufficiently focused and the objectives are shared sufficiently with the students. There are good introductions to lessons which link with previous work and teachers use technical vocabulary to help pupils understand and extend their vocabulary. The differing needs of pupils are well met and their designing and making skills are sufficiently developed. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs, and are aware of targets in individual education plans. Special education needs pupils make good progress and teachers provide extra support for learning. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames. There is a good level of display of pupils' work in classrooms and the open areas around the department, and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas. The lessons are characterised by the quality of teachers' focus on the progress and needs of individual pupils. The effective, challenging, but supportive relationships between teachers and the pupils, coupled with ongoing individual feedback and support, ensure that all pupils make good progress.
96. Overall, teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and this is effectively transmitted to pupils. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning. Key words are well reinforced in many lessons. Classes are competently managed and pupils are attentive, co-operative and eager to learn. Pupils make best progress in the lessons where activities are practical and challenging and they have opportunities to discuss their ideas with others. The recording of assessment using specific criteria linked to the schemes of work is used effectively to improve standards by setting targets for individual pupils and giving effective feedback to pupils, telling them what they need to improve and make progress. A sharper focus needs to be given to levelling and moderation of pupils' work in each year in both key stages. Teachers have a wide understanding of pupils' individual needs and provide appropriately challenging tasks for the more able pupils and alternative ways for pupils with particular learning needs to understand.
97. The leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to develop monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. A greater emphasis should be given to the use of information and communication technology, particularly to better coverage of control technology. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in its work. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The curriculum has been developed with the result that the activities are relevant to pupils. Schemes of work are in place giving detail of long-term planning to show what knowledge, skills and understanding it is intended that students of differing abilities should achieve. The assessment system and the analysis of data are used to make predictions of grades at GCSE. The number of rooms available is adequate but the quality of

accommodation to teach resistant materials and textiles needs improving. The development plan is adequate but it does not include sufficient focus on the introduction of ICT in schemes of work. There is a safety review carried out by an outside agency but there are no record of outcomes in the department. No risk assessments are taking place in the department at present. The technician provides a good level of support and makes an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department.

### Child Development GCSE

98. Standards are above average. Pupils take part in a number of projects in Year 10 and Year 11 to complete their coursework assignments. The individual practical projects are of a good standard and include research and observational studies of individual children. Pupils can recall previous work, showing good knowledge and understanding of the care and development of children. Pupils research issues relating to family life and parenting and develop an awareness of cultural influences. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and take pride in the quality of their project work. They are keen to discuss their work and do so with a level of confidence. They enjoy the work, which provides stimulus and challenge, and endeavour to succeed through patience and determination. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning are always good. They take responsibility for organising their tasks and there is much independent work.
99. The teaching is good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject, and planning ensures that lessons have a suitable pace. There are clear, short-term objectives, with careful attention paid to the sequence of activities, and good pace. Activities are well organised and there are appropriate interventions to support and sustain individual pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. The teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high. Work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Work is marked regularly with written comments which are constructive and encourage pupils. Homework reinforces the content of lessons.

### GEOGRAPHY

The provision for geography is **good**.

#### Strengths

- High standards in pupils' work in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching.
- The use of enquiry in teaching to extend pupils of all capabilities.
- Teaching of literacy and use of ICT.

#### Areas for improvement

- Consistency of marking and assessment.
- The use of individual education plans to support the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

100. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show attainment to be above average. Inspection evidence confirms this. Students with special educational needs were seen to make at least satisfactory progress, and good progress when supported by learning support assistants. There is now an emphasis on enquiry work. This is used to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially those of potentially high attainment. By the end of Year 9, pupils can use a range of geographical skills to extract information from maps and other sources and apply the knowledge thus gained to an understanding of how processes interact to create patterns.
101. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results show attainment to be well above average. Attainment has improved in recent years. Boys' achievement is above that of girls' in terms of grades A\* to C and in A\*/A grades, and is well above average, with girls' achievement above average. Inspection evidence confirms these standards. Current work shows that pupils can explain complex interactions between human and physical processes and use a wide range of geographical factors to explain and predict change in the characteristics of places over time. This was evident in lessons where Year 11 pupils were studying sustainability of urban development in the local region. Overall,

pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 11, including the gifted and talented. A low priority is given to generic individual education plans, and pupils with special educational needs make only satisfactory progress, except when supported by learning support assistants.

102. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good knowledge of the GCSE examination requirements. They plan well and cover all aspects of National Curriculum requirements. Where teaching is good, pupils respond well. They sustain concentration and work productively. Teachers make good use of enquiry techniques and decision-making exercises in encouraging pupils to work both independently and collaboratively, as appropriate. Pupils are taught research skills and pupils in Year 9 were observed making appropriate supervised use of the library facilities to research and present facts during a lesson introducing the study of Brazil. Regular assessments are planned in two of the courses, but marking of class work is inconsistent and National Curriculum levels are not always used or shared with pupils as targets. Pace in some lessons is slow. This has a negative effect on learning for the higher-attaining pupils. The choice of topics for study ensures pupils can develop the moral, social and cultural aspects of geographical issues. Year 9 pupils were seen contributing with maturity to class discussions about the morality of aid linked to development of the donor country's industry.
103. The department is well led and has clear direction. A new head of department appointed last September has extended the use of enquiry, and made changes to the assessment system to incorporate decision-making exercises in Years 7 to 9. Informal daily contact is a strong feature of the management of this department but there are also formal meetings. Teaching is regularly monitored and information from this monitoring is then fed back to the head of department. The department is committed to equality of opportunity and this is clearly outlined in the relevant policy. Work is designed to be inclusive, ethnicity does not affect progress, and there is particular emphasis on literacy development and boy-friendly topics for studies and assessment. The geography department contributes to the teaching of ICT within the main school. All teachers are trained and confident in the use of computers in their teaching. Access to computers is not always available at the most convenient times, and teachers have to modify their teaching programmes to ensure pupils have this access to curriculum-based computer work. The accommodation is good and classrooms provide good working environments with stimulating and relevant wall displays that teachers use well and make reference to in their teaching. The good teaching resources are well used, including a variety of resources in the school library.
104. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, there is consistently better use of enquiry and pupils are more confident in research and independent learning.

## HISTORY

The quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Rising standards of attainment.
- Good teaching.
- Shared commitment among staff to raising standards.
- Assessment procedures.

### Areas for improvement

- Consistency in marking pupils' work.
- Measurable targets for attainment in departmental planning.
- Study of non-European cultures.

105. Overall results in National Curriculum teacher assessments at the age of 14 were above average. In 2000, standards of attainment were average but in both 1999 and 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was above average. At GCSE, results were above average in 1999 and 2000, and well above average in 2001. The proportions of pupils achieving grades A\* to C and those achieving A\* to G were both higher than the national average, as was the proportion achieving the highest grades. As nationally, the attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. GCSE results have improved steadily over each of the last four years.

106. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, standards are above average. By Year 9, most pupils have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum history topics they have studied. Pupils can describe historical events and give reasons for and results of historical changes. They can use historical sources effectively to extract and deploy information. Pupils of average and above-average prior attainment can make some evaluation of these sources. For all pupils, the quality of structured writing is above average. Most pupils can also use historical terms correctly. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys, although girls more often take care with the presentation of their work. In Years 10 and 11, the overall standard of work seen was also above average. Among the majority of pupils, the use and evaluation of historical sources is broadly in line with national standards but pupils' knowledge and understanding and the standard of their structured writing are all above average. By the end of Year 11, most pupils can deploy their knowledge and understanding effectively to produce structured writing of a good and often very good, standard. Almost all pupils can identify similarities and differences and can explain historical causation and the consequences of historical events. Pupils of above-average potential can analyse complex events, make connections across historical periods and compare and evaluate sources thoroughly. Pupils of average attainment can evaluate sources for their usefulness and reliability. Lower-attaining pupils can make use of these sources to extract and deploy information and they are beginning to evaluate them.
107. The quality of teaching is good. Of the lessons seen, all were satisfactory or better and over four out of ten lessons were very good. This quality of teaching ensures that all pupils make good progress. There is clear evidence of gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also make good progress, generally gaining higher grades at GCSE than might be expected. Pupils with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and those of different ethnic backgrounds, some of whom have English as an additional language, all make good progress. There are a number of consistent strengths in the department's teaching. Staff have a very good command of their subject and they present their material well so as to engage the interest of pupils. They use methods which allow pupils of all abilities to learn, including those with special educational needs. In a Year 7 lesson on the Black Death, for example, the materials used were well designed to meet the differing needs of pupils. Staff manage pupils well, so as to keep them on task and maintain a purposeful working environment in the classroom. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives which are explained to each group so that pupils understand what they are doing. Teachers use skilful questioning to keep pupils involved and to develop their thinking. In Years 10 and 11, there is a clear focus on systematic teaching of the skills necessary for examination success. Time is normally used effectively, as in a very good Year 10 lesson on the League of Nations where each task had a short deadline and the pace of work was brisk. Occasionally, activities continue for too long, with a resulting loss of focus. Effective use is made of group and pair work and pupils are regularly challenged to think for themselves. In a very good Year 11 lesson on the Cuban missile crisis, groups of pupils each had to prepare a brief for President Kennedy on his policy options; this activity promoted high-level thinking and stretched the most gifted pupils. Due attention is paid to teaching both historical vocabulary and the writing skills which are crucial to success. Good use is made of books and reprographic resources. Where information and communication technology is used, it is effective in helping pupils learn, although this use is limited by access to central resources. Support staff are well deployed to help pupils with special educational needs make progress. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and moderated to an agreed standard: pupils therefore have a clear understanding of their level of attainment and of the progress they are making. There is some good practice in the routine marking of pupils' work, with diagnostic comments to help them improve, but this is not consistent across all staff and some marking is cursory.
108. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and their behaviour in lessons is almost invariably good. Relationships with their teachers are good and pupils work well together, showing respect for the contribution of others. The department makes an important contribution to the moral and social development of pupils, seen, for example, in a Year 7 lesson discussing the reasons for fear of witchcraft in medieval times. There are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and to develop their personal skills, including those of reading aloud and making presentations. While the curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements there are relatively limited opportunities for pupils to study non-European cultures.

109. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has been in post for a relatively short time but has given the department appropriate educational direction, with a clear focus on raising attainment and examination success. This commitment is shared by the department's staff. All the history in the school is taught by specialist and experienced teachers. There are secure systems, using information and communication technology, for monitoring pupil progress and identifying any under-achievement. Monitoring of teaching, however, is largely informal. Good schemes of work and lesson plans ensure consistency across the department. Appropriate targets for development of the subject are in place. The good marking policy is not implemented consistently.
110. Since the last inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in developing a wider range of teaching strategies and styles to meet the differing needs of pupils. Very good progress has been made in raising standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE level. Overall, improvement has been good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The generally good teaching where computers are used.
- Pupils share ideas and approaches well.
- Developing resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Better opportunities in subjects across the curriculum and for examination entry.
- Assessment and reporting in Years 10 and 11.
- Use of assessment to inform planning.
- Developing the scheme of work.
- Whole school management.

111. The focus was on information and communication technology across the curriculum. This reflects the fact that the subject is taught through this medium. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 was below the national average. There were no GCSE examinations in 2001 as there is no course which includes certification.
112. By the end of Year 9, attainment is average, and is reflected in the quality and quantity of work produced. In lessons, pupils demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with processing text and images, presenting information and handling data. They can also access the Internet and use this to carry out research and download images. In design and technology lessons they have opportunities to use computer-aided design. In the mixed-age Tuesday + lesson there was a very good example of pupils using PowerPoint for presentation. The use of computers for all strands of the programmes of study is in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age when they have the opportunity to develop the use of information and communication technology. The standards seen in the current Year 10 show improvement from Year 9 and are average, as they are by the end of Year 11 when pupils are aged 16. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software, including desktop publishing and use of data bases and they use spreadsheets to simulate business practice.
113. There are examples of the good use of computers to promote individual learning, particularly in the use of desktop publishing, spreadsheets, PowerPoint and word processing. In design and technology, pupils use computers for computer-aided design and manufacture. In geography, they use spreadsheets to compile data and graphs to present their findings. Computers are also used in other subjects, particularly in modern foreign languages, English, mathematics and physical education. These subjects consolidate pupils' skills in the use of computers. In business studies lessons, pupils use computers to develop their course work assignments. They have opportunities to apply their skills to solve more complex problems, particularly in handling information and data. The higher-attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They are able to discuss their

work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. Nevertheless, there are shortcomings in the application of computer skills in the majority of subjects, including mathematics and science. This limits the coverage of all of the National Curriculum programmes of study, especially computer aided drawing and handling data.

114. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils are punctual, and many take the opportunities to use computers during the lunchtime and at other times to develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.
115. The quality of teaching in lessons where computers were used was good. The competent teaching contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.
116. Since the last inspection, improvements have been satisfactory. There has been an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement in resources and access to computers. Accommodation is satisfactory, but there is a lack of resources for newer technologies, such as interactive white boards and LCD projectors. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the network. Technical support is very good.
117. The overall whole-school organisation has some shortcomings. There is a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. Leadership and management provide a clear vision and direction to promote curricular improvements. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. Limitations occur because there are no schemes of work. Whilst achievements across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are assessed and fully recognised, there is no tracking of pupil progress and attainment at ages 14 to 16 to ensure that all strands of the curriculum are covered. The school has identified appropriate priorities and targets, and is beginning to take the necessary action and review of progress towards them. There is a policy and a strategic plan to outline clearly the policies, aims and objectives. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are not always sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression, and this responsibility falls on all heads of departments and senior staff. At present, there is no discreet teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9. Not all pupils are given accreditation at the end of Year 11. The assessment of pupil attainment and progress is not used effectively to inform teachers' planning.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### Strengths

- Results in GCSE examinations.
- Good quality of teaching.
- Higher-attaining pupils write very well in the foreign language using a wide range of vocabulary and idioms.

### Areas for improvement

- The further use of the foreign language by pupils to meet routine needs for information and explanation in the classroom.
- The use of computers to develop pupils' language skills.

118. All pupils learn either French or German as their first modern foreign language. During their first term in school they have access to a second modern foreign language as well and all have the opportunity to continue to study both languages if they wish to do so. The majority of pupils have a positive approach to language learning.

119. In both French and German, results in GCSE examinations at grades A\* to C and grades A\* to G have improved over the last four years. In 1998, results were below the national average; in 2001, they were well above. In the most recent set of results, the proportion of pupils who gained A\* and A grades in German was above the national average and the results were higher than those achieved in other subjects in school. In French, no pupils gained A\* grades but the proportion of A grades was above the national average. In line with the national trend, girls' results are better than those achieved by boys.
120. Standards are above average overall in both languages by the end of Year 9. Inspection evidence confirms teacher assessments. In Years 7 to 9, pupils understand the foreign language spoken at a near-normal pace and can follow classroom instructions. They are keen to answer questions, use full sentences and take part confidently in short dialogues. Reading comprehension of textbook exercises and worksheets is good and pupils have the opportunity to select books to read independently. The majority of pupils make good progress in mastering grammar and by the age of 14 can use past, present and future tenses. They write letters and descriptions with increasing accuracy and higher-attaining pupils write at length. Pupils studying both French and German make good progress in both languages. In Years 7 to 9, pupils respond enthusiastically to the range of activities prepared for them. The majority concentrate well, listen attentively and work well in pairs and small groups.
121. In French and German, standards of attainment overall are above average by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 to 11, listening and reading comprehension continue to be good and pupils use dictionaries effectively. They speak very well on topics prepared for the GCSE examinations but rarely use the language for normal classroom exchanges with the teacher and the majority are hesitant when speaking with a stranger. A group of higher-attaining pupils in German speak with increasing fluency in unrehearsed situations. Pupils respond well to challenging written tasks and write detailed letters and descriptions; the most competent produce written coursework of a high standard.
122. Pupils with English as an additional language and from differing ethnic backgrounds achieve good standards, and those with special educational needs make good progress, especially in listening and speaking skills.
123. Teaching overall is good. Some lessons are very good. All teachers speak the foreign languages they teach fluently. They use the language well to present new material and give instructions, although they sometimes revert too readily to English and do not consistently encourage pupils to use the language as the normal means of communication in the classroom. In the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high and tasks challenge pupils to produce language of a high standard. All teachers plan lessons carefully to make good use of the resources available and to ensure a variety of activities which consolidate language skills. They prepare pupils thoroughly for GCSE examinations and monitor their progress closely. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in standards.
124. The department is well led and teachers work well as a team. They assess all skills thoroughly, identify weaknesses and then adapt work to cater for individual needs. This has had the required impact of raising standards. Since the last inspection, the department has made very good progress in raising standards. They have introduced opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure. Lesson planning now ensures progress in all language skills and provides demanding tasks for high attainers. Good progress has been made in ensuring that all pupils have a command of the relevant grammar. Problems still exist in gaining access to information and communication technology resources and this limits the range of teaching strategies.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Excellent dynamic leadership and management.
- Some excellent teaching.
- Very good achievement in Years 10 and 11, leading to good examination results.

### Areas for improvement

- Continued support and monitoring of some unsatisfactory teaching.
- Review of provision of technology.
- Review of financial provision for ongoing purchase of instruments.

125. Pupils enter the school with standards just below the national average. The most recent end-of-Year 9 assessments showed most pupils to be attaining above the national average: this reflects the good progress pupils make through Years 7 to 9. In the most recent GCSE examinations, pupils gained results significantly higher than the national average and many pupils achieved their best results in music. Results were an improvement upon the previous year.
126. Inspection evidence confirms the teacher assessment that most pupils are attaining above the national average by the age of 14. Thorough teaching of the comprehensive schemes of work, which systematically develop, but at the same time, re-visit skills and concepts, ensures that pupils achieve well. Pupils have a very secure knowledge of musical literacy, and this enables them to perform, compose and appraise music with confidence, and accurately. They successfully compose melodies, add a variety of chord accompaniments and accurately shape these compositions into binary, ternary, variation and rondo forms. The excellent module, delivered in Year 7, in which pupils are taught how to write and edit music on computers, contributes positively to their introduction to music literacy, and gives them a firm foundation on which to develop their composition skills. Pupils have a clear understanding of the development of Western music. They can correctly identify the elements of baroque, classical and romantic music, and can confidently discuss aspects of orchestration and form when listening to, and appraising, music from those periods of history.
127. Pupils make very good progress in Years 10 and 11, leading to very good attainment for most by the time they have to take their examination. Teaching, which is often excellent, challenges them to gain a deep understanding of composition techniques. In the Year 10 lesson, for example, pupils gained a secure insight into serialism and minimalism, and could effectively transfer this information to their own compositions. During the course of the lesson, they demonstrated competent musical skills by clapping very complex double rhythm patterns after listening to music by Steve Reich. Standards of attainment are relatively higher in Year 10 than in Year 11, due largely to the higher standards of practical performance.
128. Pupils with special educational needs are sensitively catered for. They make good progress in most lessons through focused tasks specifically targeted to extend their skills. In classes where there is a large proportion of less able pupils, and where teaching does not address their needs, pupils make insufficient progress. In one such class observed, the inappropriate teaching and lack of required additional support led to discipline problems. Talented pupils are extended through open-ended tasks in lessons, and are also given additional opportunities for performance through a vast provision of extra-curricular activities. Two senior pupils demonstrated their advanced skills by conducting and directing lunchtime ensemble rehearsals with confidence and success during the inspection. The department works hard to include all pupils in the musical life of the school. A notable success is that of attracting so many boys on to courses and to extra-curriculum activities.
129. The overall quality of teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9, and is very good in Years 10 and 11. In two lessons observed, teaching was excellent, and in one lesson, unsatisfactory. In successful lessons, teachers demonstrate an overwhelming love of their subject and a wish for their pupils to enjoy music. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and are always very challenging. Not a minute is wasted. There are high expectations of all pupils. New concepts, ranging from Year 7 pupils learning how to edit work, using Cakewalk software on computers, to an introduction to complex



20th Century harmonies, covered by Year 10 pupils, are delivered with total clarity. The provision of worksheets catering for the needs of individual pupils is central to the reason why most pupils make good progress. In lessons where teaching is barely satisfactory, or is unsatisfactory, problems of poor management of time, inappropriate pacing, an incorrect balance between teacher input and pupil activity lead to poor discipline and unsatisfactory progress. Assessment procedures have been reviewed since the last inspection, and are now effective. Formative and summative assessments are both thorough and ongoing. Target-setting is precise, and pupils know at what levels they are working, and what they must do to extend themselves. The effective use of music technology contributes towards the way pupils acquire music literacy skills. Computers, though in good supply within the department, use only Cakewalk software, with one being able to operate Sibelius. This restricts the potential skills taught with the appropriate resources.

130. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good attitudes to lessons, and have very good attitudes in Years 10 and 11. There is good behaviour in most lessons, and pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of the subject, and a wish to improve their skills and expertise. This, together with at least good teaching in most lessons, contributes towards pupils' good levels of achievement.
131. The leadership and management is dynamic, and this is the key to the department's success. Documentation is of a high order, and programmes of study are fully comprehensive. The department has successfully addressed the aspect of assessment, raised at the last inspection, and has also undertaken a thorough review of other recent successes and areas still to be improved. The department contributes strongly to the musical life of the school through its effect upon pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and through its extra-curriculum provision. It participates positively in the life of the community through presentations of concerts. Visiting instrumental teachers contribute significantly to the department. Very good lessons given by the percussion tutor during the inspection demonstrated the high quality of instrumental tuition the more able musicians receive. The department is fairly well resourced with musical instruments, but it does not have a rolling budget for the purchase of the more expensive orchestral and band instruments.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Very good leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Including non-participants in lessons.

132. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good in relation to standards on entry to the school. In relation to standards of attainment at the end of Year 9, achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. Results at GCSE in 2001 were above average and higher-grade results were well above national averages. Standards in core activities, while still above national expectations, are not as high as in GCSE courses. Most pupils' attitudes contribute positively to standards. Teaching contributes effectively to learning.
133. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average. Boys attain slightly higher than girls; this is consistent with differences nationally. Pupils can perform basic techniques in all physical education activities. Those in Year 8 show very good understanding of the front crawl stroke in swimming and in Year 7 pupils have very good knowledge of gymnastics terminology, which enhances their planning of paired sequences. By the end of Year 9, pupils make good progress. Pupils develop competence in basic gymnastic, dance and swimming techniques. Their development of knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups when developing basic techniques through Years 7 to 9.

However, activities do not always allow pupils to develop their observation and assessment skills so that they are clear about what they can do and need to do to improve.

134. By the end of Year 11, standards are average in core activities. Pupils have developed basic techniques of defending in basketball and can transfer them to the game situation. Pupils on the GCSE course make very good progress. Their continued good progress of the development of knowledge, understanding and performance, as in Year 10 theory of exercise, for example, enables them to use fitness activities to develop an understanding of the effect of exercise on the body. Some pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical education vocabulary are weak and therefore restrict attainment in oral and written work. The progress of pupils in core PE is restricted by a lack of consistency in the setting of challenging tasks and insufficient attention to their observation and assessment skills. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is in line with progress by other groups. Some higher-attaining pupils are restricted by tasks set, which are not sufficiently challenging.
135. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In a significant number of lessons, attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils enjoy physical education and have a responsible attitude and approach to their learning. Participation levels are good. Pupils concentrate well and therefore remain on task. They are able to work effectively as individuals but also co-operate well when working in pairs and small groups. Pupils develop good relationships with other pupils and the teacher. Many are able to take responsibility both within lessons and as part of extra-curricular activities.
136. The quality of teaching is good. In a significant number of lessons, teaching is very good. The strengths include good planning based on a secure knowledge of the subject, good organisational skills, positive interaction with pupils and a commitment to pupils' moral and social development. This means that pupils are able to learn basic techniques through appropriate activities and in an environment that encourages learning. Although good procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are now in place, greater use needs to be made of assessment in order to ensure that teachers and pupils have a clear understanding of the progress being made. Teachers are clear about intended outcomes and share them with pupils at the beginning of lessons. Teachers need to consistently use strategies in order to ensure that non-participants are included in lesson activities. Insufficient attention is paid to pupils' standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In a Year 10 fitness lesson, for example, many pupils were unable to plan an appropriate personal fitness programme properly because the level of the terminology was beyond their competence.
137. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject, with a sharp focus on raising standards. The department has made good progress in improving pupils' understanding of the importance of preparation for physical activity and teaching and learning which includes a range of tasks which meet the differing learning needs of pupils. It has developed systems and procedures to ensure that teaching and learning are now inclusive. More planned opportunities for pupils to assess their own performance against success criteria, improved teaching of numeracy and literacy skills and the use of ICT, together with strategies to include non-participants in lesson activities are needed to raise standards more quickly. The department has a strong philosophy of care for its students and a focus on the social and moral development of the students. Organisation is good, and the department's handbook provides guidance on schemes of work, lesson planning and safety matters. There is not risk assessment data for all activities and facilities, and this is a significant shortcoming. Both indoor and outdoor facilities are very good. There are very good resources, with good systems for maintenance and storage. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department recognises the importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning and provides a very good programme of activities, including competitive fixtures. Take-up by pupils is very good, with some progressing to local and area teams and competitions.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- Short course GCSE has been successfully introduced.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Greater use of ICT in lessons.

138. For the last two years, almost all pupils in Year 11 have been entered for the short GCSE course. Results are above average, and the percentage obtaining grades A\* to C has gone up from just over half of the candidates to nearly two thirds. Sixteen pupils took the full GCSE course last year, with over two thirds of them obtaining the higher grades, and results are above average.
139. From inspection evidence, standards by the end of Year 9 and 11 are above average, reflecting previous results. Few pupils come from a religious background, but most make good progress between Years 7 and 11, including lower -attaining pupils, gifted and talented pupils and those from minority ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Pupils can write effectively about aspects of all the religions prescribed by the Agreed Syllabus and can discuss ideas sensibly. Most pupils can show a personal response to the work under consideration in their writing. Some older pupils do this at length. Knowledge and understanding of religious concepts grow as pupils progress through the school. Year 7 pupils are able to analyse Creation stories and note how the messages behind these have significance, for example, to environmental issues. Year 9 pupils are able to identify distinctive features of festivals in various cultures. Year 11 GCSE candidates have a good knowledge of concepts in Hinduism and can apply these, for instance, to discussions of family life for Hindus living in Britain today.
140. The progress made by pupils reflects the good teaching in the department by the three specialist teachers. All the lessons seen during the week of the inspection were at least good; a quarter of them were very good. Teachers plan and pace their lessons well, using effective methods to enhance the learning of their pupils. Sometimes this is done through group tasks, where pupils sharpen their understanding by discussing concepts with their peers; sometimes, very good learning results from teaching from the front of the class. The teachers hold the attention of pupils extremely well. Nowhere was this better exemplified than in the Year 10 lessons on the Holocaust. Teachers used resources such as the overhead projector and video clips to very good effect to supplement their own explanations and succeeded in focusing the pupils' minds on the issues. The atmosphere in these lessons was electric: pupils absorbed the teaching in awed silence. In all lessons, pupils are managed very well and are made aware of what they have learned – learning objectives are usually revisited at the end of lessons. Homework is well used, and is often in the form of a research topic: this encourages independent learning as well as moving pupils on effectively between lessons. The needs of lower-attaining pupils are well catered for, particularly in the lower part of the school. There are learning support assistants in many lessons, and all teachers prepare tasks to meet the differing needs of their pupils.
141. Not surprisingly, pupils have a positive attitude to religious education. Two girls volunteered the information that they liked the subject; when asked why, they said that the teacher made it really interesting. Relationships in class are good, and there are very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils listen well and share the enthusiasm of their teachers for the work. A number of them choose to take the full GCSE course, as well as the compulsory short course. Reflection on many of the issues under consideration makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
142. The department is well led and managed. Although there is no department office, the three specialist rooms are grouped around the department store, which not only makes resources accessible but enables the teaching staff to interact effectively. Observation of each other's lessons

is a feature, as is a sharing of judgements on written work. Standards and teaching are monitored well. Good use is made of a limited budget; there are plenty of books – although many are rather obsolete, and worksheets usually prove to be more useful – and a good range of videos. Departmental televisions and video players are available, and new overhead projectors prove an effective resource. ICT is not used extensively and staff need more confidence in using computer technology. Curriculum time, other than for the GCSE courses, is barely adequate.

143. The provision has undoubtedly improved since the previous inspection; teaching is now consistently good, and standards are higher. GCSE results have improved, and the introduction of the short course for all Year 10 and 11 pupils has been a success.

## DRAMA

Overall the quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The commitment and enthusiasm of pupils and teachers.
- Accommodation, and resources in the Drama studio.
- The ability and willingness of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to work as a group, and to learn from each other.

### Areas for improvement

- The lack of time in Years 8 and 9 for those pupils who do not take basic skills.
- The fragmented arrangement of time in Years 7 to 9 for the pupils who also study music and art.
- The need for stronger challenges in all years to ensure that pupils produce their best.

144. The majority of pupils enter the school with very limited skills and knowledge. They make good progress and achieve well through Years 7 to 9, but are still below the national average at the end of Year 9. By this time, they have a secure knowledge of the techniques of freeze-framing, tableaux and hot seating, but it has taken them a long time to acquire this knowledge. This is partly because of the unhelpful arrangement of carousells between Music, Art and Drama, and partly because, until this academic year, no form of written planning or recording has been undertaken. During the inspection, pupils in Years 8 and 9 rehearsed in groups their representations of the story of Dr. Faustus, and the retribution he faces as he has sold his soul to Mephistopheles. They work well together, and understand that costume makes a significant difference to the way they feel when performing, as well as a difference to the potential audience. They achieve a relatively unpolished piece of theatre. They understand the principle of performance and audience. What they do not understand is the many different ways that this might be achieved. They have little concept of set, lighting, or stagecraft, although they do understand costume and props. Gifted and talented pupils, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language all achieve at broadly the same rate as everyone else.

145. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average. The pupils are currently taking a new examination at GCSE level, and so it is not possible to indicate trends of attainment under this examination. However, in the recent mock examinations 28 per cent of the pupils entered gained A\* or A, and a very pleasing 72 per cent gained A\* to C. This is above the national average. This represents good achievement by the pupils over the course of their examination years. Year 11 pupils work on their response to the stimulus sent from the examination board for their forthcoming assessment. They are good at inventing their responses, and they work well in their groups, relying on each other and valuing each other's views.

146. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and they know their pupils well. They are without doubt committed to their well being and to their dramatic development. Teachers provide a positive and welcoming climate in which pupils may experiment, may discuss with each other and with the teachers how they might approach a particular task. The teaching provides a satisfactory challenge to pupils of all ages in that pupils are expected to work together to produce their pieces of theatre. The pupils respond very well to this, and it is one of the hallmarks of the department that the social development of the pupils is positively advanced. However, the demand for better work, deeper thought and the crucial element of critical evaluation by teachers and pupils is currently underdeveloped, although steps are being

taken to remedy this. The department has very good assessment procedures, which means that the pupils and teachers know how well they are getting on. There are good self-evaluation sheets which are currently being trialled, and which are intended to lead to the pupils setting their own targets for improvement. This is very good practice, and has the potential to generate higher standards.

147. The teaching of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is necessarily fragmented, because of the way the school organises its arts modules. Time is lost in reminding pupils of the 'house rules' of the department. The modules are sometimes only four weeks long, and therefore the pace has to be brisk if the tasks are to be achieved. This does not make it easy for some pupils to remember their work from the previous time they were in the department.
148. The leadership and management of the department have experienced difficulties because of significant staffing changes. A new, temporary, teacher-in-charge will undergo her first training for head of department next month. Secondly, the department has undertaken to teach a new GCSE course this academic year. Both these elements make significant demands on the teachers and the pupils. The school's support for the department in this time of change has not yet been effective enough, a fact which is now recognised. For the first time for several years, about a quarter of the staff of the school put on an impromptu revue for the pupils on the last day of term. This was very well received, and made appropriate headlines in the school Bulletin.
149. Drama was reported under English in the last inspection report. This situation no longer obtains, as drama is now a separate and distinct subject. Since that report, there has been a significant rise in the numbers of pupils opting for drama at the beginning of Year 10. There are currently 48 in Year 10, and 28 in Year 11 taking Drama GCSE. This is a very positive move, although the very good accommodation in the form of the drama studio and its accompanying suite of rooms is very stretched with these numbers.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### Business studies

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is very good overall, and some is excellent.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and relationships.
- Very good and effective leadership.

#### Areas for improvement

- Strategies for developing group work activity.
- Greater access to information and communication technology resources.

150. Results in 2001 GCSE were impressive at A\* to C grades, and these high standards have been consistent in previous years. Business studies is a very popular optional subject.
151. By the age of 16 pupils achieve very well. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, being consistent with recent results, with both boys and girls doing well. The evidence shows that pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress, including those who are gifted and those with learning difficulties. By the end of Year 11, pupils make very good progress and develop a wide range of skills, including the ability to distinguish between branded and own label goods, to identify different types of training and various rewards and payment systems. Pupils make very effective notes to develop charts and tables on the computers and to interpret case study material. They can work most effectively in pairs and individually, working with enthusiasm and involvement to complete all tasks within the timescale set. There is considerable evidence of pupils with developed independent learning skills. Although pupils work effectively individually, there is little evidence of extended group work. Pupils have a very good understanding of key terms and concepts such as internal and external constraints, induction training and motivation. Pupils produced work of a high quality, which

is well organised and demonstrates good analysis and evaluation skills. Pupils are very thoroughly prepared for the examination.

152. Coursework is of a very good standard and computers are effectively used to develop questionnaires and spreadsheet analysis. Pupils are confident with computers and are mature, independent learners. However, there are not enough machines in the business rooms for each pupil to have their own computer and this can hinder learning and progress.
153. Overall, teaching is very good with some excellent practice and there is consistency across the two years. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and use a range of effective strategies to motivate their pupils. Lessons are well planned and well structured, with high quality support material. Teachers are very enthusiastic and this is readily shared with the pupils who learn well as a result. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and this produces a very effective environment for learning. Pupils have good knowledge of their own progress and they have high expectations of success. Classes are very well organised so that every minute counts and this encourages pupils to work with great purpose and concentration. Behaviour and attitudes to the subject are very good. In the best lessons, there is an atmosphere of excitement, achievement and enjoyment where pupils are constantly challenged and stretched and are, as a result, very confident learners. It is this expectation of enjoyment and academic success that has made business studies such a popular subject in the school. The pupils have a great deal of respect for their teachers because they recognise that the teachers are very skilful in teaching lessons that are both challenging and enjoyable. Pupil motivation is very high.
154. Departmental management is very good. The head of department leads by example and is an excellent teacher. He provides a clear vision of high standards and pupil-centred learning to his team. The business department is so effective because there is good teamwork. The department is focused on improving standards still further and developing a range of stimulating and demanding learning opportunities for the pupils. They make the best use of the resources and accommodation available and this has a positive impact on learning. The members of the department are committed to doing their very best for the pupils and this creates a shared responsibility for learning. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. The popularity of the subject has continued to improve, and as a result, the accommodation now needs to be reviewed and improved. Similarly, the number of computers has improved but has not kept pace with the overall demand. Assessment is now more rigorous and both teachers and pupils have a clear idea of what needs to be achieved next. The examination results have continued to improve and this success, together with the very high quality teaching, accounts for the popularity of business studies.

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

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

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

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	0	2	0	52	0	0.8
Mathematics							
Leisure and Tourism							

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	9	0	46	100	96	4.7	6.6
Biology	10	10	34	40	88	2.2	5.3
Business Studies	15	7	32	100	92	5.5	5.5
Chemistry	4	25	43	50	90	3	5.9
Communication Studies	15	67	31	100	93	7.9	5.5
Economics	11	64	36	100	89	7.1	5.5
English Literature	15	33	37	100	95	6.4	5.9
English Language	1	100	30	100	92	8	5.3
French	5	20	38	40	89	2.8	5.5
Full Design and Technology	3	67	30	100	91	6.1	4.9
Geography	16	25	38	100	92	5.9	5.8
German	4	50	40	100	91	5.5	5.8
Graphical Applications	5	0	22	80	88	2.8	4.7
History	8	63	35	88	88	6.8	5.5
Home Economics	3	0	28	100	83	4	4.7
Mathematics	13	31	43	92	87	4.9	5.8
Physics	6	50	40	100	88	6.7	5.7
Religious Studies	4	0	38	100	92	3	5.8
Sociology	5	20	35	60	86	2.8	5.3
Sports Studies/PE	12	25	25	92	92	5.3	5.1

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

155. The focus for the inspection was on mathematics and physics but chemistry and biology were sampled. In chemistry, A-level examination results in the summer of 2001 were better than those for biology, but were not as good as those in physics. They were well below the national average, but there were too few candidates to make comparisons statistically valid. AS examination results in chemistry were also below average. Evidence from lesson observation and work seen indicates that students are working at levels appropriate to their prior knowledge, and that standards are slightly better than those indicated in the 2001 examinations. The teaching of theory often lacks stimulation and interest, and consequently is not as effective as it should be. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In one Year 13 lesson observed, the teacher's good knowledge of chemistry and the clear lesson plan led students to gain a secure understanding of the properties of the transition series of elements. Students supported and helped each other well, so increasing their competence in practical skills.
156. In biology, examination results in 2001 were below average and were not as good as those in physics and chemistry. AS level examinations in 2001 were also well below expectations. Inspection evidence shows that current standards in Years 12 and 13 are slightly better, although still below average. Students' achievement, however, is satisfactory in relation to their GCSE results. In one lesson observed, higher-attaining students showed a good understanding of the structure and function of the heart and circulatory system, but their depth of knowledge was not sufficient to achieve the higher grades. Students were attentive and found the content relevant and interesting. Some of the students were good in discussion and most joined in readily through the effective encouragement of the teacher. The biology course is very popular, with larger numbers of students, a significant number of whom have low prior attainment. Lower-attaining students are much more passive learners, apply less effort and make relatively less progress. Entry requirements need to be refined to reduce the level of failure in A level examinations.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.
- Teaching is good. It provides stimulating and challenging material that prepares students well for their external examinations.

##### Areas for improvement

- Many students rely too heavily on their teachers for guidance; they are not required to undertake independent research often enough.

157. Mathematics is a popular AS and A level subject and, over recent years, students have achieved success in external examinations that is generally in line with national averages. This was the case once again in 2001. Standards of work seen were better and above average, and students are achieving well. This improvement in standards reflects the difference in cohorts. Most have well-developed skills of thinking mathematically. They solve complex problems and link different topics covered in the subject. They often formulate and test hypotheses, and perform calculations with a firm understanding of the concepts involved. Good examples include: using scalar products to prove trigonometric and geometric rules; determining the centres of mass of complex shapes; differentiating vector equations for circular motion and relating vector and Cartesian equations of lines and planes.
158. Students enjoy the subject. This contributes well to their learning. They are willing to seek assistance from their teachers and to challenge their hypotheses. Often they ask questions that are designed to extend their knowledge and understanding, but they do not undertake independent study very often.



159. Teaching is good and teachers have high expectations of their students. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and they use it well to provide challenging tasks for their students. Students' work is regularly marked and often it is annotated with a very helpful level of detailed comment. These comments identify the exact point of error and the correct method. Because of this, students make good progress in lessons and over time. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to undertake independent study or research, and this restricts learning somewhat. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## Physics

The quality of provision in physics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching underpins the good progress that students are making.
- Good use of assessment.
- Planning that ensures the students are challenged to give their very best.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- Take up and retention rates are high.

### Areas for improvement

- Further improve the consistency of teaching.
- Resources, with particular reference to larger pieces of equipment and computers.
- Better access for students to computers and data-logging.

160. The small numbers of students entered for the A level examination in 2001 make national comparisons inappropriate, although attainment was above the national average. All students passed, and this was an improvement on the previous year in which, although there were more candidates, attainment was then in line with national figures. AS examination results in 2001 were above average.

161. Inspection evidence shows that current standards are above average, and better than those indicated by students' results in the GCE examinations in 2000 and 2001. Achievement is good in relation to prior attainment. The very best work makes hypotheses explicit, conclusions consistent with a raft of results and good critical evaluations. In the lessons seen, students were doing well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. In a Year 13 lesson on modes of radioactive decay, most students displayed a good understanding of the meaning of 'half-life' in relation to radioactive substances and knew that the half-life indicated the instability of the nucleus of an atom. They extended their knowledge further by finding out how and why different elements emit different types of radiation. On a graph showing electron number against proton number for stable nuclei, students of all levels of attainment were able to plot accurately the positions of a series of unstable isotopes. Most students were able to explain the composition of the nuclei of the isotopes above, close to the stability line, and those below it. There was a good discussion, in which the teacher involved all students, so that all gained a good understanding of alpha, beta+ and beta- decays, enabling them to relate these to isotope positions on the stability curve and to explain how the different nuclei become more stable.

162. Students in Year 12 are achieving good results in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. In one lesson, students planned and tackled rigorous investigative work into the effect of gravity on the motion of a paper baking case. They calculated the average velocity. Higher attainers picked up very quickly how they could work out mathematically the uncertainty (error) in their value for the velocity. The teacher provided effective mathematical support to help students deepen their understanding of the work.

163. Students in both years learn well. They talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning. All the students are enthusiastic about the subject, concentrate well and respond readily to their teachers' questions. They take a keen interest in practical lessons and develop their practical skills well. Behaviour was very good in all the lessons observed. Relationships between the staff and students and between the students are very good, and they support each other very effectively when working in groups.

164. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some notable examples of very good teaching, reflected in the quality of students' learning. A significant feature of the teaching is that two teachers are used and deployed to their specialist strengths. They teach specific aspects of the course and the students' learning benefits from this good provision. However, attainment is affected by the variable quality of teaching. The best teaching has enthusiasm which transmits itself to pupils, high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, has clearly planned stimulating activities and is imaginative in the choice of activities used to explain complex ideas. The students are encouraged to take an active part in discussions and to ask questions, and this valuing of their ideas and knowledge contributes to the good level of progress made and the learning of all. The demanding questioning of students, designed to make them reflect and think critically, gives the teacher a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Very effective support is given to individuals, often including evaluative comments aimed at raising levels of achievement and the rate of progress.
165. The independent work which students undertake is well prepared and the tasks set complement the content of the lessons well. They extract information from books and use computers effectively. Most compile their notes carefully. Skills in the use of computers are developing, but their progress in data-logging techniques is hindered by a lack of appropriate resources.
166. The leadership and management of the course are good, and this has ensured good progress since the last inspection. There is clear vision of the purpose of the course, and of how to teach and assess it. There is also a clear commitment to raising standards further. Good monitoring and evaluation of students' work are leading to improved standards in attainment. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation of teaching are in place, but need to be further developed and more rigorously applied to raise the satisfactory and good teaching to the level of the very best. There needs to be more sharing of the very good practice that exists within the subject department. The take-up rate for physics is high and this is clearly linked to the performance rate in the physical science aspect of GCSE and to the image provided for sixth form work.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

Design and technology was sampled. The GCE A/S and A level results are good. All students who took the examination gained a grade. The standards of work of current students are above average, and they are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. In the lesson seen, they were doing very well as a result of effective teaching which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. Students recall knowledge and apply it well, and their project work shows the same confidence as their class work. Students learn very well over time. They are attentive, work productively and respond very well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles they experience over time. They rise to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. The good teaching and learning result from work in the faculty being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. The planning effectively reflected the course requirement and determined the level for good teaching. Recording of progress and target setting based on careful analysis of student performance from testing and assessment are well established. Learning outcomes are sharply focused.

## **BUSINESS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching.
- Strong relationships between teachers and students.
- Very good leadership and management.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Greater access to computers.
- Provision of dedicated business studies area for sixth form study.
- Increase involvement with local businesses.

167. Standards in the 2001 AS examination were well above average. In GCE A level results were above average and consistent with the results over the previous three years. Over the last four years, the average points per candidate in A level business has been above average. There have been no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls during this period. Overall, students achieve well.
168. The standards of written work and levels of understanding observed were high. The quality of work is above average and consistent with the good results achieved in recent years. In Year 12, AS students can closely analyse a segmentation case study and draw out relevant conclusions. They argue their points of view with confidence and depth of understanding. They draw upon their own work experience to reflect upon 'on and off the job' training and the benefit to the individual and company. Year 13 show considerable skill at developing decision-making models and drawing conclusions on their usefulness to business planning. The students also work with considerable focus and accuracy to extract adverse and positive variances from a case study. Their concentration and purpose are impressive.
169. Teaching is good overall, with some satisfactory and some very good features. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and their planning is effective. In the very best lessons, their expectations of the students are very high and they constantly challenge students to solve business problems and produce solutions. In a minority of lessons, there is not enough challenge and the expectation is that the teacher will provide the main lesson content, and students are not consistently encouraged to actively test out business hypotheses. Overall, the teachers have considerable expertise and are enthusiastic about the subject and share this with the students who learn well as a result. Relationships between staff and students are very good and this produces an environment in which good progress is made.
170. Students learn well; they work with purpose, have good concentration and a strong desire to achieve high standards. They have a mature approach to their studies but at times they are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their own independent learning skills. Students use their computer skills well to enhance the presentation and content of their work, although the availability and provision of computers are inadequate. The students themselves commented on the difficulties they often face in finding a computer to process their coursework, and this shortcoming has a detrimental effect on learning. The assessment of student work is thorough and each student is aware of what they have to do to strengthen their work. Students are well prepared for the examinations with the provision of well-planned case study material and, as the 2001 AS examination results have indicated, they make impressive progress on the course.
171. The good teaching and learning result from the department being very well led and managed. Students confirmed that the subject had exceeded their expectations and that the staff are always available to give additional support and guidance. Several of those interviewed had decided to carry on their business education at university. The head of department has built up a strong department. There are undoubted strengths, which has led to over eighty students studying business in the sixth form. There is no dedicated teaching space for sixth formers and the resulting classroom environment is not conducive to effective group debate and discussion, which is necessary at this stage. Computer resources are not very effective for high-quality presentations. At present there are only limited contacts with local businesses and this is an area to be developed. Overall, the department has many strengths, in particular, the enthusiasm and drive of the head of department and the expertise of the other staff. It is a very popular department with the students and deservedly so.

## ECONOMICS

The quality of provision in economics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Good quality of teaching.
- Students' attitudes and the manner in which they challenge ideas and information.

### Areas for improvement

- Quality of marking and feedback to inform students of their progress.

172. Results at A level have been consistently higher than the national average and in comparison with other subjects within the school. Numbers have been small and there is no consistent pattern in the relative performance of boys and girls. There was no A level group in 2000 but larger numbers are now returning to the subject, at least to AS level within the curriculum pattern in Year 12. In 2001, AS results were good, and A level results were well above average, with all entrants gaining a pass grade at both levels.
173. Attainment is above average. Progress and achievement are good. Students respond readily to the stimulus of open and searching questions and demonstrate the ability to explore their subject critically and analyse the information or views they are given. The relationship with staff is adult and friendly without losing a rigorous approach to understanding the subject. On one occasion, students remained at the end of the lesson to discuss the question set for homework with each other and with the teacher.
174. Teaching is good. Two experienced teachers provide well-organised lessons which follow a clear scheme of work and offer a variety of individual and group learning opportunities, including the use of external resources, journals and Internet and Intranet. They have a sound knowledge of the subject and ensure students work hard and at a good pace and are challenged to think constructively throughout lessons.
175. Economics is managed as part of the business studies department. There is a recently developed departmental handbook with clear statements about how the economics course will be taught and the progress of students assessed. Students have general written guidance as to what is required to achieve particular A level grades. Written feedback on individual assignments is not sufficiently explicit as to how students can improve current performance and student notes are not monitored in the depth required to eradicate spelling or factual errors.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

In the sixth form, students' knowledge is above average. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. There are opportunities for students to extend and consolidate their computer skills through their course work. Accreditation for information and communication technology for students is through Key Skills Level 3. Recent results have been very encouraging and show that students are achieving well. Access to computers is limited and this has an adverse effect on the use of computers in subjects and during private study time. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

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

### **Physical education**

Standards in AS and A2 examinations are in line with national averages. Predicted grades suggest that in the next two years results will be above national averages. This is supported by work seen during the inspection. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students do not have recreation and leisure as part of their timetabled enrichment provision.

### **Travel and tourism**

Standards and teaching are good. Inspection evidence from a very good, and extremely professional, one-day conference supports this judgement. Students had planned the event with a balanced programme to contribute to their understanding of the strategic, ethical and commercial aspects of travel and tourism, secured sponsorship, arranged speakers and an excellent venue in a country club and had produced a professional, full-colour brochure.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No courses are taken.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus was on performing studies but art and design, theatre studies, music and drama were sampled.

Although A level results in art and design have varied, the results for 2001 were broadly in line with national figures. There is a good take-up for the subject and most students achieve well when compared to their GCSE results. Standards are, overall, above average. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching is good. Students are challenged to think for themselves. They respond well to this, are well motivated and have positive attitudes to the subject. Most are technically competent, are imaginative and willing to tackle challenging ideas and themes. Their written personal studies are a strength; the content of these is good, with evidence of writing that is analytical and discursive, and they are presented in appropriately creative styles. Support and advice for students about higher education courses are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

The standards of attainment in theatre studies are above average overall. The lessons sampled indicate that the students have a very good grasp of character analysis. Students work extremely well together in their groups, and have a very secure grasp of how to achieve a variety of effects through the use of stagecraft. They work hard, and develop skills between them. They derive great benefit from their attendance at various local theatre groups, and from the good range of extra-curricular drama activities which they undertake at school. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There is very good subject knowledge, but sometimes the students are not challenged sufficiently. Sometimes the demand for excellence is too covert. They are clearly capable of very high standards.

The overall provision for music is very good. Standards are good, and the combination of very good teaching and very good attitudes of students to their studies leads to very good achievement. Students have appropriate standards of practical performance to follow an AS and A2 course. They are developing good independent learning skills, as exemplified through extensive individual research.

### Performing Studies

Overall, provision in performing studies is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Subject knowledge of teachers.
- Student grasp of key ideas and ability to apply them to practical work at A-level.

#### Areas for improvement

- Management and leadership of the subject.
- Organisation and quality of assessment.
- Lesson planning to enable students to develop independent thinking skills.

176. The school has almost completed teaching a two-year course leading to A-level performing studies for the first time this year. It is not possible, therefore, to report upon previous results or trends in performance at A-level. AS level results were good last year, with almost two thirds of students obtaining a higher grade (A or B), and were well above average overall.

177. Standards of work seen are average overall, with a marked difference between those obtained in the first and second year of the course. They are very good in the second year, but below expectations in the first year. The same difference is found in achievement. By age 18, students' achievement is good. They understand and explain well the central concepts underlying the constituent elements of dance, drama and music. They also demonstrate well an ability to draw them together by combining thoughtful specialist reading with perceptive reflections on their own work to apply theory to practice. For instance, one student wrote with insight about the process of rehearsing and performing a dance piece, justifying the decisions she took, as well as explaining the inspiration she drew from the work of Isadora Duncan. Another group of students worked well together to select a historical subject as a basis for performance. They researched the life of Lady Jane Grey, skilfully identifying elements of character and dramatic conflict before going on to choose from the repertoire of possible practical performance approaches best matching the skills

they had developed during the course. These they chose well to exploit the varied individual skills present in the group, in order to convey their ideas effectively to an audience.

178. By age 17, attainment is below expectations and students achieve less well than expected. For instance, their ability to summarise the contextual background and identify musical features of well-known recordings by significant groups such as the Beatles is limited by their lack of preparation and lack of opportunities in class to work independently. Girls' performance is much better than that of boys in the first year of the course, where girls reach average standards, but boys fall well below. In their second year of the course, a small all-girls' group achieves very well and attainment is well above average.
179. Students learn effectively to use computers, laying out written assignments with logic and care by exploiting word-processing facilities profitably to communicate their ideas clearly to a reader. They make sensible use of both Internet connections and CD-ROMs in the library to conduct background research. Students also make adequate use of the library, although there are not enough books on dance and popular music to promote independent research at the expected level. Students present written work with clarity and pride, so that their folders of notes and assignments demonstrate a steady growth in their understanding and confidence. They show enthusiasm and interest, a good standard of teamwork and a determination to work independently while sharing results. These characteristics are particularly evident from students in their final year. Girls are more articulate than boys in the first year of the course, and learn well because they take full opportunity to ask and answer questions, as well as to learn by active participation in class. Boys, on the other hand, apply less effort and do not work as independently when encouraged to do so, and their learning suffers as a consequence.
180. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and used well to coach and prompt students. This feature is particularly valued by the students themselves, whose views of the subject are very positive. Written work is marked conscientiously, and students are given a clear idea of their level of attainment. Nevertheless, assessment is at present insufficiently detailed to give them precise guidance on what they need to do in order to do better. Opportunities are missed in the first year to equip students with the background knowledge necessary to analyse popular musical styles, and the skills to reflect and research independently. Accommodation is adequate.
181. Arrangements to co-ordinate the subject lack clarity. The three separate specialist elements of dance, drama and music are planned for in isolation by the well-qualified teachers who take each one. As a result, students' progress across the subject as a whole is not checked adequately. Planning is limited beyond the basic requirements of the examination syllabus, and new resources are restricted. These factors have resulted in an absence of the necessary planning to identify and tackle the particular needs of AS level students, with a negative effect upon their learning. No judgements can be made for improvement since the last inspection as this is a new subject.

## **HUMANITIES**

The main focus of the inspection was geography and history but theology, sociology and psychology were sampled. In theology, students are reaching a standard just above the national average, and their progress is such that the 100 per cent pass rate achieved in the subject in recent years will be maintained. Students are taught well, and are very good independent learners. Apart from the 11 students taking the course, no sixth formers currently receive lessons in religious education, which is in breach of statutory regulations.

## Geography

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

### Strengths

- Standards in examinations.
- Many good features of the teaching.
- Commitment of staff to raising standards.
- The positive attitude and responsiveness of students.

### Areas for improvement

- Further use of assessment data to inform planning and targets setting.
- More challenge for the most talented students.
- Provision of opportunities for greater student initiative and interaction in some lessons.
- Clarification of the line management system for the department.

182. The A level results for 2001 were broadly in line with the national average, measured both by points score and the percentage of A to E grades. The percentage of the higher A to B grades was below the national average. Standards were highest in the individual research essays and environmental investigations. The performance of girls is no longer higher than that of boys. Results over the previous three years were above the national average and showed a steady upward trend.

183. Standards being achieved by the current cohort of students in Year 13 are average, reflecting slight differences in prior attainment. Most students make good progress. They produce a large volume of written work which closely follows the requirements of the syllabus and builds well on GCSE material. All use technical vocabulary with precision and accuracy. Most can both describe and explain spatial processes, such as plant succession on sand dunes, and give reasoned examples to justify their definitions. Case studies are carefully selected to develop students' knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, such as planning decisions for integrated coastal zone management and the new store location for a French company. Good use is made of local resources, such as a study of The Deepings to illustrate the principles of rural change. Their project work enables the high attainers to demonstrate skills of analysis and independent research, as well as to evaluate their own methodology. Standards of presentation are high. Some lower attainers file large quantities of duplicated material and make little further use of them.

184. The overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory, but also no very good, lessons were seen. The strengths in teaching include good expectations of students and good subject knowledge, which is demonstrated in clear introductions to new topics. The objectives of lessons are clear. Students willingly undertake independent research, as on the causes and impact of global warming. They are focused and keen to succeed. Good use is made of a variety of interesting supplementary resources which provide the basis for lively classroom discussion, such as the linking of variations in rainfall patterns to rates of erosion in Lyme Bay. A few tasks are of a rather low level and a brisk pace in lessons is not always consistently sustained. There is limited interaction between the students in lessons and they are not always given opportunities to sustain an oral presentation. Questioning techniques which challenge the most talented beyond the confines of the syllabus and which allow them to take initiatives are underdeveloped.

185. Most students demonstrate good literacy and numeracy skills. They write fluently and at length, showing a logical structure and progression in the development of an argument. Students use evidence well to illustrate the points they are making. Graphs and diagrams are used appropriately and the interpretation of data is accurate. The department recommends websites for research at home and there is evidence that these have been visited. It contributes formally to student portfolios of Key Skills through the word processing and graphical work in individual projects. The department makes an effective contribution to students' social and cultural development through its world-wide choice of case studies, as well as to citizenship through the impact of planning decisions on local communities.

186. The department is well and conscientiously led by a subject leader appointed this year, committed to build on the strengths noted at the time of the last inspection. There is a clear sense of direction

and the team builds on the complementary skills of its teaching staff. Teachers' experience as examiners is used well to the benefit of the students. The assessment of students' work is thorough and much useful feedback and self-evaluation takes place in lessons. The use of assessment information to inform planning is not yet well developed.

## History

Provision for history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Above-average standards of attainment.
- Good teaching which challenges students.
- Good relationships.
- Clear focus on raising standards and on examination success.

### Areas for improvement

- Consistency in marking students' work.
- Strategies to ensure active participation in lessons by every student.
- Measurable targets for raising attainment in departmental plans.

187. The department offers courses at AS Level in Year 12 and GCE A Level in Year 13 with common English history units and a choice of European units. The units which are offered partly reflect the expertise and specialisms of the history staff. Student numbers vary considerably from year to year and there are also variations in the prior learning and ability of each group. However, the retention rate is good.
188. The overall standard of examination performance is above average. Results four years ago were below average but they have improved in each year since then, and results for the most recent cohort of students in 2001 were well above average. The proportion of students achieving a pass grade was similar to that nationally, but the proportion attaining the highest grades, and the average points score per student, was well above average. The first results for the new AS level examinations were good, with every student achieving a pass grade and some 60 per cent achieved the two highest grades. There is no pattern of differing attainment between boys and girls.
189. Standards are above average, reflecting previous examination results. Students have a good level of knowledge and understanding and a secure grasp of key historical concepts. Most have a clear understanding of the complexities of cause and consequence and can make judgements about the relative importance of different factors. They write in analytical form and can substantiate their conclusions. Most students can produce a thorough analysis of a historical question and support it with a good level of factual knowledge. Higher-attaining students produce a comprehensive analysis, making complex links and judgements about different interpretations of the past. Lower-attaining students select and deploy information and write in a form which is largely analytical but which may sometimes revert to the narrative. Students can use, compare and evaluate historical sources at an appropriate level; they can interpret these sources and place them in their historical context, as seen in Year 12 lessons on the Putney Debates and on women in Nazi Germany.
190. The achievement of students is good. Almost all student make good progress from GCSE through Years 12 and 13, with steady gains in their knowledge, understanding and their skills of analysis and interpretation. Most students achieve examination results which are above those which their previous attainment might suggest. Students have good opportunities in history to develop their personal and learning skills, including the skills needed to make presentations and those for individual study.
191. Teaching is good, with a significant number of very good lessons. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and present it in a lively and accessible manner. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives which students understand. Teachers strike a good balance between explanation and the skilful use of questioning to draw out students' thinking, as seen in a Year 13 discussion on quite complex theories of economic development in Stalin's Russia. There is



a clear focus on systematic teaching of the source work and analytical skills needed for students to succeed at this level. Students are usually active learners and they are regularly challenged. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on women in Nazi Germany, the teacher required students to work in pairs interpreting examples of propaganda, an exercise which elicited much higher-level thinking. Occasionally, the sources used are less demanding. Teachers generally plan their lessons so that students all contribute. Sometimes, however, there is too much teacher talk and opportunities are missed for students to be more active. Due attention is paid to teaching the writing skills which are crucial to success at this level of work. The assessment of students work is good, and diagnostic comments on assessed work give detailed and specific advice on how students can improve. There are, however, occasions on which routine marking is less thorough.

192. The positive attitudes of students is an important factor in raising standards. Students respect their teachers and think highly – often very highly – of them. Relationships are very good. In lessons, students sustain concentration and interest. Most students participate willingly in discussions and they work constructively together in pair or group work. Sometimes a minority of students are rather passive in lessons. Students take their work seriously and make a good effort with their written assignments. They generally feel secure about their work, a minority more so in the European units than the English history elements of their course.
193. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear focus on raising standards and there is a shared commitment to improve. The department analyses examination performance and assesses students work carefully to inform teaching. As a result, students have a clear understanding of their own performance, progress and targets. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is less consistent. Department planning is good and the staff coped well with the introduction of the new AS Level examinations. The departmental development plan lacks clear and measurable targets for attainment. Literature resources are good and well managed but there is insufficient access to information and communication technology.
194. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. At that time, standards were judged to be average and they have improved to well above average.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The main focus of the inspection was English and German. Communication studies and French were also sampled. In 2001, all the students entered for the communication studies examination passed, with nearly half achieving A or B grades. This is well above the national average. One lesson was observed, which was very well taught and in which students made very good progress in analysing an advertising campaign using a range of critiques. The teacher used her specialist subject knowledge to challenge students to think deeply, and they responded enthusiastically and intelligently.

Overall, the quality of provision in French is good. Standards at A level were above average in 1999, and well below average in 2001 (there were no candidates in 2000), reflecting the attainment potential of the student group in any particular year. The six candidates who sat AS level in 2001 gained grades in the B to E range. The present Year 12 are working consistently above average, showing only the occasional weakness initially through basic errors and omissions. Year 13 perform well in speaking and writing, especially when drawing on and exploiting their own knowledge. They are less confident in the more “set” pieces, such as reading comprehension. Teaching is good. The challenging nature of the work stretches pupils to their limit. Leadership and management are good.

## English

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- There are effective strategies for preparing students for examinations.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

### Area for improvement

- The department does not analyse how much 'added value' they are giving students throughout the course.

195. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were higher than the national average. Fifteen candidates were entered for the examination; all passed and a third achieved A or B grades. The trend has fluctuated over time. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above the national average, with students on target to attain a full range of grades in the English literature advanced level course. Students acquire a good grounding in critical techniques and most write extended, detailed, analytical pieces. Some good work was seen during the inspection on students honing their writing through the drafting process, on Hamlet and Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. In a lower sixth lesson seen, students were exploring John Donne's sonnet, 'Sweetest Love I do not goe'. They made interesting and perceptive comments about Donne's themes and were able to explain ways in which he achieved his effects. Students achieve well as many start the course with average attainment levels.

196. Teaching and learning on the AS and A-level courses are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions of the students, as well as to explain the finer points of literary analysis. In a Year 13 English literature group, the teacher's specialist subject knowledge underpinned her explanations and enabled her to ask specific, targeted questions, which helped to deepen the students' understanding of how to analyse Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott'. In another lesson on 'The General Prologue' by Chaucer, the teacher's subject knowledge underpinned his explanations and enabled him to challenge students to think deeply. Students have positive attitudes to the subject, which they take seriously; they want to do well. Procedures for marking and assessing work are good. A-level work is marked helpfully using examination criteria, which are shared with students. Little analysis of achievement is carried out to enable teachers to see if students do as well as, or better than, expected, and this is a developing area for the department.

197. Leadership and management are good. Strengths include provision, standards and attainment. The department has responded to the demands of the new AS and A level courses well and has made good improvement since the last inspection.

## German

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching, especially teachers' high expectations of students' performance.
- The commitment and determination of the students.

### Areas for improvement

- More formal and regular access to information and communication technology.

198. Since 1998, standards at A level have risen from below average to average in comparison with national standards. Small numbers in the groups can, however, make the reliability of these comparisons questionable. Achievements at AS level by the three students in the present Year 13 showed grades B, C and D, despite severe disruptions to the continuity of teaching. As few boys

take up modern foreign languages post-16, no accurate judgement of their performance in relation to girls is possible.

199. From inspection evidence, standards are above average in Year 12, and accurately reflect the students' capabilities. They are making good progress in assimilating the patterns of more complex grammar, such as adjective endings, which leads to greater accuracy in speaking and writing. They handle the sophisticated level of authentic listening and reading material with confidence and good understanding. In one lesson the teacher challenged them to answer the first part of a listening exercise on the use of babies in advertising, without consulting the transcript of the text. Using a Walkman, and listening to the extract as often as needed, they had to link six beginnings of a sentence, resuming the content of the extract, with six out of a choice of ten completions. Only one question, where the crucial word was subtly hidden in an infinitive phrase, defeated them.
200. In Year 13, standards are average overall. Students generally speak and write with confidence, although difficulties with word order occasionally undermine the accuracy of their work. The range of language and variety of constructions is sometimes restricted and can detract from the quality of their finished products. They handle the more complicated grammatical concepts, such as passive and subjunctive voices, with competence. In listening and reading exercises, marks are consistently above average.
201. All the students are very dedicated and hard working. They respond very well to challenge, show a strong determination to communicate, and strive for the highest level of success. In lessons there is a high proportion of continuous dialogue in which all participate. They show a high degree of initiative, independence and responsibility in the research for and completion of their work.
202. Teaching is good. Its main strength is the very high expectations teachers have of their students' performance. The work teachers set is challenging, stretching students to their limits, and there is great emphasis on the means of attaining the highest marks and the development of the skills to achieve them. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher was concentrating on practising the skill of summary writing, using a passage on prejudice against foreigners. Students were challenged to extract the key points in words and phrases and form their own sentence around them, and to avoid lifting out chunks of irrelevant text. This required recalling knowledge of a wide range of grammar and syntax previously acquired, and painstakingly constructing a complex and meaningful paragraph.
203. All teachers have a profound, detailed and up-to-date knowledge of their subjects; their lessons are well planned, and conducted according to their students' needs. If it is necessary to practice a particular skill or language pattern, this can sometimes lead to a lack of variety, but a brisk pace and efficient use of time ensure that the purpose of the lesson is effectively fulfilled. At all times, students are aware of their attainment and progress, and especially of how they can improve their performance. They are well supported with a subject handbook and materials for practice and revision. One student with visual difficulties is well supported with enlarged materials. Feedback on their work is full and constructive where appropriate, but teachers also take the opportunity to emphasise examination techniques to the whole group and individually in the course of a lesson. In a Year 12 lesson, for instance, the teacher called individual students forward during a comprehension exercise to discuss the latest piece of assessed work. She invited each student to look at the work, together with the examination marking criteria, to make their own judgement on how their piece fitted the criteria, and to suggest a mark. She then explained why it fell into a particular category, and what elements were necessary to pass into the higher categories.
204. The department is well organised and the teachers consistently share the best practice. Opportunities for enhancing student skills through information and communication technology are limited. Access to central facilities cannot be guaranteed on a regular and formal basis. Students do access applications and the Internet independently.
205. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Students are actively and fully involved in lessons. The work is challenging and stretches them to the limit of their capabilities. They are more confident in speaking and writing, the latter being a strong feature of more able students. Grammar is a major emphasis of work in Year 12, as a base for encouraging accurate speaking and writing in Year 13.