

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**BISHOP'S CASTLE**

Bishop's Castle

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123564

Headteacher: Mr T Hunt

Reporting inspector: Mrs V M Lynch  
1475

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 190107

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: Bishop's Castle  
Shropshire

Postcode: SY9 5AY

Telephone number: 01588 638257

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Weston

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1475	V Lynch	Registered inspector	Physical education	Characteristics How high are standards? (Interpretation of results) How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and person development Attendance How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	English Equal Opportunities	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20649	John Flinn	Team inspector	Geography Religious Education	
300596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science	
31525	Sue O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	Teaching and Learning
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art & Design	
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	History Business Studies	
2866	Robert Battey	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Community College in Bishop's Castle is an 11 -18 comprehensive school serving the small market town of Bishop's Castle and an extensive rural area within a 15 mile radius of the school. There are 519 pupils on the roll of the main school and 51 in the sixth form. The school remains smaller than other schools despite an increase in numbers since the previous inspection.

Employment in the area is similar to the national picture and is mainly in farming and associated industries and tourism. The area is designated as a European area of need for social and economic regeneration. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is 7.1 which is below the national average.

Results in Key Stage 2 tests taken in primary schools show that attainment of pupils when they join the school is sometimes just above or just below the national average. The school does have a similar proportion of higher attaining pupils to other schools. However, the percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is slightly above the national average and the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above the national average. There are no ethnic minority pupils or pupils with English as an additional language in the school. From time to time children from travelling families attend the school.

The school is designated as a community college and has a thriving community education and arts programme. It has received a national Sportsmark Award and is a project school for a national initiative in computer-assisted design and manufacturing.

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

This is a good school with many significant strengths. Test and examination results are nearly always above the national average because teaching is good. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, systems and procedures have been introduced that will ensure even further improvement. Despite managing on a deficit budget the school provides good value for money because all staff work very hard for their pupils and for each other.

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

- Consistently produces very good results in science and geography.
- Good teaching helps all pupils, especially those with special educational needs, to make good progress.
- The senior management team and the governors provide very effective leadership.
- Activities outside lessons and the school's links with the community extend learning opportunities for pupils.
- Shows outstanding care and concern for all its pupils and students.
- Ensures that all members of the college community value and respect each other and work well together.

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

- The amount of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the curriculum.
- The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of computers to support learning in subjects.
- The way the school prepares pupils to live and work in a multi-cultural society.

*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 and since that time a new headteacher has been appointed. Test results at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved, although occasionally, despite results usually being above the national average, there is a year where they fall below. There is a similar situation in Key Stage 4. There has been good progress since the previous inspection on all the key issues, although more remains to be done to complete the work.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

When pupils join the school aged 11 their attainment overall is usually just above the national average. However, every year there is an above average number of pupils with some difficulties in learning. They are usually boys and their difficulties are often in aspects of literacy. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above the national average and many of those with learning difficulties are achieving just below the national expectation. This represents good progress. In 2001, standards at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and better than similar schools. GCSE results have been above the national average, but fell in 2000. Test and examination results are usually above the national average but occasionally they do fall below this. It is important to note that year groups are very small and that three or four pupils can make the difference between being above or below the national average. The school has set challenging targets but until last year did not have accurate data on which to base its targets. In 2001 GCSE results were just 4 per cent below target because two pupils did not get their 5+ A\*-C grades. GCE A-level results in 2001 were above the national average and the best yet for the college.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils enjoy coming to the college and have very good attitudes to all aspects of college life. They are particularly enthusiastic about their involvement in activities outside of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils behave well in lessons, in the playground and whilst moving around the college.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils grow into mature and confident young people at the college. They are very friendly and have very good relationships with each other and with adults.
Attendance	Good: pupils are punctual to school and lessons.

The way pupils behave and the way they relate to each other help create a very positive atmosphere for learning. Very few lessons are disrupted and so pupils can make the best use of their time. Because they regularly attend school nearly all pupils benefit from their courses and gain accreditation at the end of Year 11.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English is good and in mathematics it is satisfactory. In some mathematics lessons teaching is outstanding. Teaching in science is very good. Despite a small percentage of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, teaching in all subjects overall is satisfactory and often good. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are well-integrated into classes and make good progress with the support of learning assistants. Because there is no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning there are inconsistencies and extremes in teaching in mathematics and science, ranging from the unsatisfactory to the excellent. Where teaching was less than satisfactory this was usually the result of poor classroom management of pupils, weak teaching strategies in spite of good subject knowledge, and poor lesson planning. Literacy is taught well in English, and some other subjects ensure that they contribute to the development of literacy skills. In some mathematics lessons, numeracy skills are taught effectively.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a good range of opportunities for all pupils. Activities outside lessons are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The curriculum for lower attainers and those with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual development are good. The college is a very social and moral community. It caters well for developing pupils' understanding of their own culture.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The college ensures that all pupils feel safe and secure. Good arrangements exist for helping pupils through their studies and in preparing them for the next steps in their learning.

The school is very committed to working closely with parents and keeps them well-informed about activities in the college and the progress that pupils are making. The curriculum has many strengths, but there is not enough time given to the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 and the arrangements for teaching information and communication technology do not meet the legal requirements. Whilst arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, the college does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to appreciate the contributions of other cultures to our society. The way the school cares for its pupils is a major strength.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: the headteacher effectively leads a very dynamic and committed team of staff. They have preserved all that was good at the time of the previous inspection and made good progress in introducing a number of significant changes and improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: the governors are very knowledgeable and experienced. They manage a very difficult financial situation well and are appropriately involved in shaping the direction of the college.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: a real strength is the thorough and honest annual evaluation of the school's development plan. More could be done to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all reach the best standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: in view of the financial constraints under which the school operates it has done exceptionally well to keep up with developments.

Staffing and accommodation are satisfactory. However, budget constraints mean that there are not enough teachers so many teachers spend a higher proportion than average of their time teaching. Learning resources are adequate and the school has done well to obtain sufficient numbers of computers. The leadership and management of the school are strong and are a significant feature in maintaining the high quality provision on limited finances. The governors and the senior management team have a good understanding of the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Three hundred and sixty-nine completed questionnaires were returned, which was a 67.7 per cent response. Forty-six parents attended the meeting with the Registered Inspector.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Pupils and students make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is comfortable with parents who raise questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> <li>• Pupils and students are helped to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>• There is a good range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework that is set.</li> <li>• The information that they receive on their children's progress.</li> <li>• The way the school works with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team support the parents' positive views on the school and were very impressed by the high percentage of response to the questionnaire. They believe that this reflects parents' support for the school. They found that generally the amount of homework set was appropriate for the age of pupils. Pupils' reports were looked at and the team found that they were generally very informative. It is possible that the concerns about the information parents' receive was about past practice when reports were not as informative as they now are. The team found the school very willing to work with parents and found the staff in reception very welcoming to all visitors.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 51 students in the small sixth form. Generally about 50 per cent of pupils in Year 11 remain at the college. They have usually done well in their GCSE examinations, gaining at least four GCSE grades A\*-C. A further 20 per cent go on to further study elsewhere. The school provides mainly A level courses but there is an intermediate vocational course in business. Two students in the sixth form have statements of special educational need and another is on the special educational needs register. The school has good links with the local FE College in Shrewsbury, which extends the courses available to both school students and adults in the Bishop's Castle area.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is good. Students who remain at the college benefit from very good teaching that leads to very good learning. Standards are above the national average and nearly all students complete their courses. Results vary year on year, but reflect the differences between groups of students. The sixth form is very well led and managed and it is usually a lack of resources that limits aspirations. Courses provided meet the needs of the students currently studying in the sixth form, but many have to go elsewhere to study courses that the college cannot afford to run. There are not enough courses to meet the needs of lower attainers and those with special educational needs.

### Strengths

- Pupils reach good standards in geography, religious education, history, English and biology.
- Teaching is very good.
- Sixth form students have very good attitudes and provide very good role models for younger pupils.
- The progress that individual students are making is checked regularly.
- The head of the sixth form shows very dedicated leadership and management.
- The governors, the headteacher and all staff support the development of the sixth form.

### What could be improved

- The range of courses and opportunities in addition to advanced courses.
- The planning for creative use of the time available for teaching and learning.
- The teaching of key skills.

*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	In 2001 A-level results were good, but AS results were low and consequently no students continued on to A-level this year. Teaching is satisfactory with lessons planned to involve all students in discussion. Although students are keen to work hard and do well, they are often not challenged enough.
Chemistry	Results in 2000 were close to the national average. Most students achieve grades close to what could be expected, but those who underachieve are students who enter the sixth form with modest GCSE grades. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but the current system of having a separate teacher for each year group as they come through from Year 11 means that these teachers do not share good practice.
Business	Overall, the quality of provision in business is good. Results in 2000 on the GNVQ Advanced course were in line with the national average. Standards at Intermediate Level were also in line in 2000 with over three-quarters of students gaining awards. Standards at A-Level were well below the national average. Standards in work seen are in line with the national average. Teaching of the A Level course is good and leads to good learning with positive and productive gains in students' knowledge and skills and good attitudes to work.
Geography	The quality of provision in geography is very good because teachers actively involve all students in a wide range of learning activities. Advanced level results in 2000 were satisfactory with several students achieving the highest grades. Results for 2001 show a significant improvement with all students in the small group achieving well above the pass grade.
English	The provision for this subject is good. Results in examinations have been consistently good and in 2001 all the students achieved grade A at GCE advanced level. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features.

Work seen in the other subjects sampled was at least satisfactory and in some subjects it was good. This is because teaching in the sixth form is often good or very good and all students have very positive attitudes to their studies.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Sixth form students are very well cared for. Good procedures are in place to assess their needs and to provide guidance on future study. The regular informal contact and the half-termly progress review meetings with personal tutors are major strengths, providing continuity of care and support. Whilst the quality of this support is often very good, it is not consistently good for all groups.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership inspires the commitment of all staff to work very hard to provide for the needs of students. Monitoring of students' performance is good although monitoring of other aspects of the sixth form such as teaching and the curriculum are severely constrained by lack of time. The college plans very carefully so that educational priorities are very well supported. Students have equal access to courses provided they fulfil the entry requirement of four grade C levels at GCSE. There is not yet suitable provision for all pupils with special education needs.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive and committed staff who are accessible and freely give their time to help students.</li> <li>• Students are treated as responsible young adults.</li> <li>• They enjoy most of the courses which are on offer.</li> <li>• The friendliness and mutual support of other students.</li> <li>• The induction programme helps integrate new students so that they settle very quickly and very successfully.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key skills courses.</li> <li>• Range of courses.</li> <li>• Access to physical education and religious education.</li> <li>• Consistency of high quality tutoring.</li> <li>• The guidance they are given about future options.</li> </ul>

Students are very positive about the college. Inspectors agree with the majority of their comments about the sixth form and applaud their very good understanding of their college, particularly the commitment of all staff. Inspectors recognise partial justification in concerns expressed by some students about the lack of guidance about future options. These comments reflect the temporary difficulties of split accommodation for careers guidance and library and computer facilities, the lack of a careers adviser for the whole of last half term, some variability in the quality of tutoring and the time pressures on the management of the sixth form and of careers.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 When pupils join the school aged 11 their attainment overall is usually just above the national average. However, every year there is an above-average number of pupils with some difficulties in learning. These pupils are usually boys and their difficulties are often in aspects of literacy. By the end of Year 9, attainment is above the national average and many of those with learning difficulties are achieving just below the national expectation. GCSE results have been above the national average, but fell in 2000. In looking at the standards in the school and comparing them to the national average it is important to note that year groups are very small and that three or four pupils can make the difference between being above or below the national average.

#### **Test results at the end of Year 9**

- 2 These are generally above the national average, although they fell below the national average in 1999. Since then they have steadily improved. In 2001, results in English were in line with the national average and in mathematics and science they were above. Results are in line with similar schools. However, in this particular year group nearly a third of pupils are on the special needs register and 10 per cent have statements of special educational needs. Therefore, the inspection team judge these results to be better than similar schools. Girls did better than boys and boys did not do as well as boys did nationally. In all other subjects, the results of teachers' assessments are above the national average.

#### **GCSE results**

- 3 GCSE results at the end of Year 11 improved until 2000 when results declined. They further declined in 2001. In both 2000 and 2001, results were just below the national average. Results in 2000 were broadly in line with similar schools, but the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* - C grades was well below similar schools. Results were good in science, geography, drama, design and technology and French, but could have been better in English literature, art, history and maths. Girls do better than boys, but both do well compared with boys and girls nationally; girls do particularly well. The gap between them is narrowing. As with the results at the end of Year 9 because of the small cohort a few pupils can make a significant difference to results.

#### **Progress from results and towards targets**

- 4 Results in 2000 indicate unsatisfactory progress on the basis of these pupils' results at the end of Year 9. However, results in 2001 reflect the below-average results of these pupils at the end of Year 9. The school was 10 per cent below target for five + A\* - C grades in 2000 and 4 per cent below in 2001. It reached its target for one + A\* - G grades. One reason for the school not reaching its targets is that when the targets were set they were not based on accurate information on what pupils had already achieved.
- 5 Lower ability and average ability pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and many do well to achieve at least five GCSE grades A\* - G. Higher ability pupils make good progress in art, design technology, drama and

geography. In too many subjects the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades is below the national average. The school has not identified its gifted and talented pupils and higher attainers make progress similar to their peers. In all years, girls do better than boys in subjects that rely heavily on literacy skills.

### **Standards of work seen in lessons**

- 6 The standards of work seen are very good in science and good in geography, music and religious education in all years. In all other subject standards are in line with standards expected nationally. Pupils make good progress in all years in science, art, design technology, geography, information and communication technology, religious education and music.

### **Standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs.**

- 7 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall in Years 7 to 9 and particularly in science, art, design technology, information and communication technology and French. In Years 10 and 11 they also make good progress in geography, music and religious education. Those who continue to study French make satisfactory progress. However, many of them do not continue to learn a modern foreign language, but benefit from an alternative series of courses. They make very good progress on these accredited courses designed specifically to meet their needs and interests.

### **Standards in literacy**

- 8 Literacy standards are satisfactory overall and good in a few subjects. In geography there are examples of very good descriptive writing, especially in Year 7, where pupils use accurate and colourful language in their study of the rain forests. Science teachers encourage a variety of writing styles, including the composition of poetry, to help pupils learn key facts about neutralisation, for example. The results are very good. In art, pupils know how to take relevant notes and in history, English and information and communication technology, they show good skills in researching topics independently. There are some missed opportunities in design and technology for students to reinforce their learning of technical terms. In modern foreign languages, personal and social education and in music and mathematics, there are inaccuracies in pupils' writing. Their skills in reading are average with higher attaining pupils being more confident, as shown in the poetry reading of Year 11 pupils in assembly. The college is helping pupils to develop better reading habits by designating time each week for everyone to read for 15 minutes during the morning registration period.
- 9 Speaking skills are good and pupils are generally articulate and prepared to participate fully in lessons. This includes pupils with special educational needs who achieve well because teachers draw them into the discussion skilfully in lessons such as drama and science. Listening is a weakness. Many pupils are too ready to engage in personal discussions and consequently, they miss important parts of a lesson unless the teacher repeats the point.

### **Standards of numeracy**

- 10 Standards of numeracy are at least satisfactory throughout the school, particularly in mathematics and science. They are often good in Years 7 and 8 because of the effects of teaching using the National Numeracy Strategy in primary feeder schools and in Year 7 mathematics lessons. In science lessons, pupils use stop-watches

accurately. They are able to use tables and graphs to both represent and interpret data accurately. Year 10 and 11 pupils in geography lessons use spreadsheets to analyse fieldwork data as part of GCSE coursework and pupils of all ages clearly understand variations in rainfall represented on bar charts. Pupils in design and technology measure height and weight accurately. They also demonstrate a satisfactory appreciation of temperature scales and nutritional values. An awareness of proportion helps pupils of all ages in art to work effectively in two and three dimensions.

### **Standards in information and communication technology**

- 11 Standards are now good in Years 7 to 9 because there is a planned and structured programme that is being well taught. By the age of 14, pupils can do word processing, desk-top publishing and use spreadsheets and databases. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are confident to use computers. Current work in Year 10 and 11 indicates that standards are improving. Because it is not always easy to book the computer rooms and there are few computers in subject areas pupils are not yet able to use the skills they have acquired to support their learning in other subjects.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Results**

- 12 The average points score for candidates entered for two or more A levels of AS equivalent varies year on year. In 1999 and 2001 it was above the national average, whereas in other years it was below to a greater or lesser extent. Results in GNVQ business courses at intermediate and advanced levels in both 2000 and 2001 are good with all but one student gaining the qualification. Girls do much better than boys. Their average points score in 2000 was twice that of boys.

### **Standards in lessons and progress**

- 13 In the sixth form, standards are good in English, biology, art, geography, history and religious studies and students make good progress in these subjects. They make very good progress in French. Standards are satisfactory in design technology. Students with special educational needs make good progress in their chosen subjects. There are no differences in the work seen between boys and girls in all subjects.

### **Standards in key skills.**

- 14 Whilst the numeracy standards in Year 12 and Year 13 overall are satisfactory, the current arrangements for teaching key skills, including communication and the application of number, is unsatisfactory. However, students in science show good numeracy standards in analysing data in biology and physics, whilst students in business education at both intermediate and advanced levels demonstrate a good use of graphs to analyse results in a crisp eating survey. The standards in communication skills are good, which support students' learning in their other subjects.

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

### **Attitudes**

- 15 Pupils at the college have good attitudes, a characteristic evident during the previous inspection. They are enthusiastic about their life at the college. They appreciate the very good range of additional activities available to them and enjoy their involvement. Pupils' attitudes at the after-school circus club for Year 9 students clearly demonstrate this feature of college life. Artistes remained totally focused on improving their performance as they walked on stilts, balanced plates and attempted to stay upright on single wheel bicycles.
- 16 The attitudes of pupils, including those with special educational needs, to their learning are equally good and make significant contribution to the progress they make. They enjoy their lessons and usually remain focussed on their work. Year 8 mathematicians were so involved in their demonstration of different angles using their arms that even the appearance of snow failed to interrupt the lesson. Attitudes are only occasionally less positive. In a few lessons some students are unsettled, neither listening to the teacher nor participating fully in the tasks provided for them.

### **Behaviour**

- 17 The behaviour of the pupils in the college is good. They behave well in lessons, where they are almost always attentive, calm and prepared to meet the expectations of the teacher. Although they are busy and chatty as they move around the school, they are usually aware of others, moving aside as the need arises. Pupils are very composed when they are together formally in large groups. Their very good behaviour as they enter the hall for assembly ensures that these gatherings are dignified occasions.
- 18 A few pupils have difficulty conforming to the college's high expectations of their behaviour. The minor disturbances that occur are not usually allowed to disrupt the learning of others and are very sensitively handled. Very few pupils are excluded from college. There was no evidence of bullying, racism or sexism observed during the inspection. Reports from pupils and parents indicate that the occasions when bullying occurs are rare and pupils are confident that these will be handled well by staff. Very occasionally a few pupils misbehave in lessons. This only happens when teachers fail to set and reinforce high expectations of good behaviour and remind pupils of the consequences of misbehaviour, or to plan for sufficient involvement by pupils in the lessons.

### **Relationships**

- 19 The very good relationships between the whole community are a strength of the college. Relationships were already good at the time of the previous inspection and have further improved since then. Pupils, boys and girls, younger and older, enjoy being with one another, whether in the classrooms or around the college. They offer each other very good support in lessons and automatically and modestly help each other. Proffering a helping hand comes naturally to these pupils. Year 7 scientists noticed their neighbours struggling to focus their microscopes and immediately shared their recently acquired skill and expertise.
- 20 Another significant feature of the very good relationships that prevail is the natural ease with which all pupils are included in college life. Those pupils who have special education needs are totally involved with their friends in work and leisure activities.



No one is left out of the impromptu football games in the playground or the socialising around the school. The college is a very harmonious community.

- 21 Pupils relate equally well with adults. They show high levels of mutual interest, care, trust and respect. These characteristics of college life are recognised and applauded by parents and are stated aims of the college. Shared humour is evident in many of the interactions between adults and pupils. Pupils value the feelings and experiences of others. They listen attentively when teachers share stories and situations about their own particular circumstances. They show high levels of interest in, and compassion for, the lives and needs of others. They regularly organise activities for charities, responding well to emerging world situations and poverty.

### **Personal Development**

- 22 The college acknowledges the importance of each pupil's personality and ensures that each makes good gains in their personal development. This represents another improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils, including those who have additional challenges due to their special educational needs, take good levels of responsibility for their busy lives in college. Many pack a lot into their week and most manage to have their correct equipment to hand. They use their planners well and organise their bags correctly despite the absence of lockers. Occasionally they are left with no alternative but to stack their bags on the floor outside a classroom or library. They do this carefully and the instant retrieval of the correct bag is remarkable in its precision. The college remains in good condition and this is a reflection of the pupils' pride in their environment. Pupils willingly accept responsibility. They act as community assistants greeting visitors pleasantly at the school entrance and are happy to carry out a range of duties to support general school administration. They use their own initiative well and ideas presented to the school council often result in changes to school routines, uniform or facilities, such as the introduction of the polo shirts.

### **Attendance**

- 23 Attendance at the college is good because pupils want to come and staff are careful about monitoring absence. Pupils arrive in college and lessons in time for activities to start promptly.

### **Sixth form**

- 24 Students' attitudes in the sixth form are very good. They are very enthusiastic about the college and enjoy opportunities to share this enthusiasm with visitors. They all approach their lessons, except key skills lessons, eagerly and are committed and energetic in pursuit of their studies. They willingly involve themselves in the many activities which are on offer, relishing the activities and opportunities provided beyond the bounds of the college. Students are fulsome in their praise of the residential trip to Robin Hood's Bay. Their behaviour is very good, ensuring that they provide very good role models for younger pupils.
- 25 The quality of relationships in the sixth form is very good, both among students and with adults. Students work very well together. They are sensible and mature young people and are very civil as they respond to one another and to staff. This very good mutual support impacts significantly on the progress they are making. A few students join the sixth form from other schools and comment very favourably on the ease with which they have been welcomed and accepted. Students make very good gains in their personal development during their time in the sixth form. They take

very good levels of initiative, as instanced by their organisation of a fashion show for charity. They even managed to persuade staff to be amongst the models. They are managing their own learning very well and are showing a positive commitment to continuing their education after the college.

- 26 The attendance of the sixth form students is good and students are careful about arriving in college and lessons before activities are due to begin.

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

- 27 The quality of teaching is good or very good in two thirds of lessons. This is matched by good learning across the school. There was a small proportion of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching, especially in the proportion of teaching that is now good or very good. Teaching in English is good and in mathematics it is satisfactory. In some mathematics lessons teaching is outstanding. Teaching in science is very good.
- 28 The skills of literacy are well taught by the English department. Some subjects, for example science, art and design, geography and religious education, promote literacy very well in their teaching. The teaching of numeracy by the mathematics department is satisfactory. Teaching in about half of mathematics lessons, particularly in Year 7, is very effective in promoting numeracy skills. Learning in science and food technology is clearly enhanced because numeracy skills are taught effectively in most of these lessons. As yet, the teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy through the work of other departments is uneven in its effectiveness.
- 29 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are well-integrated into classes and make good progress with the support of learning assistants. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, pupils with learning difficulties were well supported in understanding printed texts in small groups. They then successfully provided word-processed answers to comprehension questions and completed work similar to that of the rest of the class.
- 30 Most teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils acquire thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson on algebraic expressions, the teacher's use of her authoritative knowledge led to a very well-structured series of activities that maintained a good pace and kept pupils concentrating hard right to the end. In spite of the abstract nature of the work, pupils were enthusiastic and learned fast as a result of excellent teaching.
- 31 In many lessons lively, enthusiastic teaching generates a very good response from pupils who enjoy learning. In such lessons, relationships between pupils and teacher are good and pupils are keen to contribute. In a Year 10 lesson for pupils beginning German, the teacher's own enthusiasm, allied to excellent planning and carefully staged strategies, kept all pupils alert and quick to respond. They progressed from listening to their teacher using German to using it themselves with confidence and accuracy. Expectations of their achievement were high and were justified by the excellent learning.
- 32 The skilful use of a variety of strategies and well-prepared materials is a feature of many successful lessons. Pupils enjoy taking an active part in lessons and discussing their work. In a Year 7 music lesson, the teacher's demonstration of the use of the voice allowed pupils the opportunity to evaluate different performances and to discuss vocal techniques, dynamics, tone and song. Pupils were keen to sing

the Aboriginal songs presented for themselves. In most modern languages lessons pupils have the opportunity to practise the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and are well used to lessons entirely conducted in the foreign language. The use of games makes for enjoyment and good practice of teaching points.

- 33 High expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning underpin much good teaching. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, pupils were familiar with class routines and wasted no time in getting down to work. They showed a high level of concentration and good application. Boys and girls of differing abilities made very good progress and standards overall were good or very good.
- 34 Where teaching is good and pupils make good progress there is good use of evaluation and review of the progress pupils are making. All departments mark pupils' work regularly and in GCSE courses pupils' are made aware of their grade predictions. In some subjects such as art, evaluation of the work of individuals leads to improved levels of performance.
- 35 Where teaching was less than satisfactory this was usually the result of poor classroom management of pupils, weak teaching strategies in spite of good subject knowledge, and poor lesson planning. In these lessons there was a lack of appropriate materials, the pace of the lesson was slow and expectations of what pupils were to achieve were low. In response, pupils' behaviour was inattentive and sometimes disruptive. Learning was poor.
- 36 Although much of the teaching across the school is good, the proportion of very good teaching is less than 20 per cent. There are aspects of teaching that could be better and would increase this proportion. In a number of lessons, tighter planning would make a difference.
- 37 Overall, while most teaching is good and overall curriculum planning is satisfactory, the lack of rigorous lesson planning often reduces the effectiveness of potentially very good teaching. Learning objectives for lessons, identified by teachers, usually focus on the activities to be carried out or, more briefly, the teaching point intended. Lesson planning does not identify the learning that pupils are expected to achieve through the planned activities. This makes it hard for teachers, and especially for pupils, to know how well they are progressing. A review of what has been learnt during the lesson, undertaken towards the end of hour-long lessons, helps pupils to focus on learning, but this is only occasionally carried out. The English department does this well through the literacy strategy, but it is not a feature of most lessons.
- 38 Departments implement their own assessment procedures and there is wide variation in their effectiveness in securing improvement in pupils' work. Very few departments share with pupils, in language comprehensible to pupils and parents, the subject-specific criteria related to National Curriculum levels. This is needed in order for pupils to take greater personal responsibility for improving their work.
- 39 In some subjects, homework adds an extra dimension to learning and gives pupils opportunities for independent initiative. In others, homework is a continuation of classroom activity, and in some cases, is a time-filling exercise with little purpose. The homework timetable sometimes places uneven demands on pupils. Pupils interviewed in Year 7 expressed the stress they felt when they had three pieces of homework a night to complete when on other nights they had one piece or none.

## Sixth form

- 40 In the sixth form three quarters of teaching is good and approximately 30 per cent is very good. All teaching is at least satisfactory. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to help students explore the subject in increasing depth. In particular, the teaching of A-level subjects is well supported by course syllabuses that develop pupils' understanding and skills. The use of assessment is good and pupils know how much progress they are making and what they need to do to raise the level of their performance. Pupils' attitudes to study are good and many show very good levels of independent work and initiative.

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

- 41 In Years 7-9, the college provides a wide range of curriculum opportunities. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education are taught. However, the lack of timetabled curriculum time for information and communication technology lessons is affecting the standards that pupils achieve. Time-tabling and grouping of pupils for design and technology lessons means that some groups contain a large number of pupils. This is also the case in some option groupings in Years 10 and 11. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall with strengths in English, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, physical and religious education.
- 42 The schools' strategy for improving literacy skills is satisfactory, although the lack of an agreed literacy policy results in an inconsistent approach from subject to subject. Whilst no whole-school numeracy policy currently exists, strategies for the teaching of numeracy skills are satisfactory. Most departments ensure that numeracy skills are sufficient to promote learning in their own subject areas.
- 43 The curriculum provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been thoroughly revised since the previous inspection. The various strands, academic, social and work related cater for the needs and interests of each individual pupil. However, statutory requirements in relation to teaching information and communication technology and religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are still not met. Twenty-seven pupils do not do French and design and technology in order to follow GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses in information and communication technology. The science department provides relevant courses for all pupils, especially those with special educational needs. Courses in single and rural science or rural science with a certificate of achievement are relevant and provide a good experience for pupils.
- 44 The college has a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils are included in activities and benefit from being part of the college. This includes good adaptations to allow pupils with disabilities to take a full part in most subjects. The college offers good levels of support and provision for pupils with special educational needs. It provides a good programme and fully meets the requirements of the nationally agreed Code of Practice. There is a good range of alternative courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- 45 The college makes exceptionally good provision for pupils who are deemed to be at risk of being excluded or whose attendance is causing concern. These pupils are given the opportunity to attend regular work experience and to follow a revised curriculum tailored to their needs. An individual programme is developed for each pupil with clear targets through careful planning. The inclusion project enables pupils to have access to what the college has to offer and to remain on the college roll.

- 46 Pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities and participation rates are high. Staff and parents give generously of their time to enable several activities to take place after school. The flourishing Young Engineers' Club has won several awards and provides very good opportunities for pupils to consider and respond to the needs of less fortunate people. In addition to sport and games where matches are regularly played against other schools, there are subject clubs, chess and reading clubs. Some departments, for example music and information and communication technology, are open to all at lunch times and enable pupils to rehearse and practise skills learnt in lessons.
- 47 The provision for personal and social education is good. The annual health conference makes a positive impact on pupils in Years 9 to 13. Recent work has made it clearer what needs to be taught each year. However, at present there is still some inconsistency within the quality of personal and social education teaching. The college does not have a pro-active approach to teaching about the dangers of racism or sexism. There is a very positive community ethos reflected in the programme where pupils have the opportunities to experience real life situations, for example visits to the local police station and magistrates' court.
- 48 A major improvement since the previous inspection for careers guidance is the good provision for Year 10 pupils. There is also a very good careers convention with outside agencies involved, all of whom make a positive impact especially through the well designed and planned work experience programme. Pupils find their own placements and last year included work opportunities in Switzerland, Kenya and local primary schools. The careers programme is designed to prepare pupils for adult life by encouraging a positive attitude to employment. Pupils are also equipped with the relevant knowledge and understanding to help them to make a choice of occupation or further study. There is a good range of resources and information to help pupils make their choices. There is not enough monitoring and evaluation of careers teaching provision so that best practise can be identified and shared.
- 49 The college has links with partner schools and colleges designed to ease transfer to the college for its new pupils. There are regular headteacher meetings and an open evening for Year 6 parents and pupils. Teachers from English, mathematics and religious education departments have strong links with their primary colleagues in order to ensure curriculum continuity.

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

- 50 The college has good arrangements for nurturing pupils' personal development and is in the process of identifying exactly what each department is doing in order to share best practice.

### **Spiritual**

- 51 The college provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the fundamental questions of life. Assemblies always contain the opportunity for them to pause and consider their feelings and experiences. There was a stunning example of genuine spirituality when older pupils listened to the tape of a song by a local singer. The dignity of this particular occasion was further enhanced and promoted by the excellent display along the entire back wall of the hall. This display included many examples of pupils' work, the content showing genuine reflection along with actual old uniforms from the various services. This very good use of display to promote spirituality is a particularly significant feature of the college. Many expressed

enthusiasm for the spiritual element of the work of a local sculptor who regularly creates large exhibits in the entrance hall.

- 52 The college does not fulfil a daily act of collective worship. Pupils have either two or three assemblies each week depending on specific college arrangements. The tutor sessions on remaining days do not all contain time for reflection.
- 53 There are very good opportunities in religious education lessons for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to consider spirituality. The college does not provide a religious education course for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Some departments provide suitable opportunities for reflection within lessons. Science creates situations where aspects of their learning genuinely stun pupils. Year 7 biologists were enthralled as they observed cell formations of minute particles of leaves through microscopes. Gasps of awe emerged as they focussed their microscopes and identified the formations.

### **Moral**

- 54 The college is a very moral community. The rights and responsibilities of individuals are very well promoted, from the descriptions in the prospectus and home/college agreement to the quality of each individual interaction between all members of the school community. The very good relationships fostered within the community and clear expectations of correct behaviour create a very good framework for moral development. Pupils are given good opportunities within lessons to consider moral issues. Scientists are encouraged to debate the value of particular inventions. Pupils in history consider the impact of social situations on the lives of different groups. Some of the extra-curricular activities make significant impact on pupils' moral development. Young Engineers in the after school club show very good understanding of the needs of blind children as they carefully construct toys. The college promotes a number of environmental projects such as the construction of the willow whale within the college grounds (a large whale constructed out of growing willow trees), which are very much enjoyed by pupils.

### **Social**

- 55 The college is a very friendly community where pupils work and play very well together. It promotes the social dimension of learning very well. The college provides good opportunities in lessons for pupils to work together in pairs and groups and to respect the views of others. Pupils are usually given suitable opportunities to use their own initiative in lessons. They are also encouraged to use their initiative in other aspects of school life taking significant levels of responsibility for themselves. Staff work very hard to provide a wide range of extra activities. These activities are of great benefit to the pupils, many of whom come from remote rural communities with little access to social opportunities. The college promotes a wide range of competitive opportunities through art, music, chess, sport and many others. Designs and constructions by the boys and girls in the young engineers club continue to win awards at national level. Pupils talk engagingly about the residential activities arranged for them; Year 7 pupils are already looking forward to their camp next summer.
- 56 The college now provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Cultural**

- 57 The college helps pupils to understand British culture and the particular aspects of

the local culture. Many local artists share their individual talents with the pupils and a good range of visits to local places of interest are organised. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. The few occasions when the lives and customs of other societies are promoted stand out because of their scarcity. The art department does a useful project on aborigines and the food from other cultures is discussed in food technology. The religious education department is the only department that is making a significant impact on pupils' multi-cultural understanding.

## **Sixth form**

- 58 The range of subjects in the sixth form includes 16 GCE A-levels, together with vocational courses in business at GNVQ intermediate level. However, it does not meet the statutory requirement for the teaching of religious education. There is no timetabled physical education available for students in Years 12 and 13. This was mentioned at the time of the previous inspection. Students entering the sixth form are expected to have attained at least four or more GCSE grades A\*-C, but this requirement is not always consistently applied. Numbers of students in the sixth form are low with approximately one third of Year 11 pupils entering the sixth form in 2001. The curriculum presently offered meets the needs of the higher attaining students, but does not sufficiently address the needs of other students. The range of learning opportunities in addition to advanced courses is limited. This restricts opportunities for sixth form study for pupils with special educational needs. The college is aware that some students are unable to study their choice of subjects.
- 59 The college places great emphasis on informing Year 11 pupils about the sixth form and preparing them for entry. There is an information evening for both pupils and parents. Very careful mentoring of students takes place during their time in the sixth form with regular reviews and monitoring of progress. There is a good range of career resources, information and guidance towards further and higher education routes.
- 60 Although some subject teaching groups, for example English, history and mathematics, are small, teaching time allocation is lower than in other sixth forms. Students in Years 12 and 13 studying art and design and design and technology are still taught together. Up until 2001, students studying A level business studies and GNVQ business were taught together, which resulted in underachievement.
- 61 The college recognises that the provision and participation by students in key skills lessons are presently unsatisfactory. Lessons are arranged as 'drop in' sessions with attendance controlled by other time-tabling commitments. In one information and communication technology session, only two students out of a potential 25 turned up. Students have yet to be convinced of the value of this course. Opportunities are given for students who fail to achieve a C grade to retake GCSE in mathematics.
- 62 The college provides good arrangements for the personal development of sixth form students. Students comment on the change in the way they are supported by staff who expect them to take full responsibility for their own learning. The college has produced a useful sixth form study skills guide, which is regularly promoted to the students. They are encouraged to take significant responsibility for aspects of school life and organisation such as leading the school council and showing prospective students and their parents around the college. Students are also encouraged to help with younger students. Some sixth formers accompany the Year 7 students on camp. Sixth formers demonstrated their commitment to college life, and society in

general, by selling poppies around the school, helping younger pupils understand their emerging responsibilities for others. Sixth form students are encouraged to collaborate very effectively in their lessons, many of which are tutorial in style. Easy, relaxed and reflective discussion emerged during a sixth form lesson about the communication of the dangers of alcohol abuse. Sixth form students do not attend assemblies.

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

- 63 The college is very successful in paying close attention to the welfare of pupils and students. It takes very good care of its pupils, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff spend considerable time and energy building very good relationships with pupils and responding to their individual needs. Tutors are more involved in the pastoral system than they were at the time of the previous inspection and now carefully monitor and record pupils' personal development. Most tutor periods are well managed, enjoyed by pupils and providing suitable activities to support pupils' learning, such as checking the use of planners.
- 64 Very good relationships exist throughout the whole college community. The college has developed very good administrative and communication procedures and general office staff are exceptionally efficient, friendly and effective. These very positive features of college life ensure fast, easy, relaxed and accurate communication between all adults in the college, particularly about pupils' needs.
- 65 Support staff generally make very positive contributions to both pupils' learning and their welfare in college. Pupils who have special education needs are given good support by specialist assistants. Pupils who are sick or injured are looked after very carefully. The positive attitudes and skills of the catering staff enable pupils to benefit from healthy food in a pleasant atmosphere. The college is kept clean and in good condition. This ensures both a healthy environment for staff and pupils and successfully stimulates pupils to care for their environment.
- 66 The college provides good support for pupils with special education needs. Individual education plans express specific needs well and these are regularly reviewed.
- 67 Arrangements to promote regular attendance are very good. Office staff are extremely diligent in checking registers and following up any unexplained absence.
- 68 Almost all the staff have high expectations of pupils expecting them to take some responsibility for their own behaviour and encouraging them to recognise when these standards are not maintained. A few pupils experience difficulty conforming to the college's code of conduct. Their unsatisfactory behaviour is usually not allowed to interfere with the learning of others. The college has very good procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour, only rarely using exclusion as the ultimate sanction. Most staff use rewards well to motivate pupils to work hard and behave well.
- 69 The college now has very good arrangements to ensure the overall health and safety of the community. Staff are very clear about their specific and individual responsibilities and frequent reminders are given to children about the potential hazards of situations. Very good child protection arrangements are further enhanced by the very good knowledge that all staff in the college have of all pupils.



## **Assessment**

- 70 The college has good arrangements for assessing how pupils are getting on with their studies and makes satisfactory use of results to inform future activities. Departments make good use of national tests and many make good use of their own procedures for assessing pupils' work. The college has developed its own scale for marking that is now well used. Staff in some departments, for example science and mathematics, have taken these good assessment arrangements further and use the results in future planning. Teachers record each student's performance accurately and regularly in specific areas of the subject. They then make very good use of this information to identify the next piece of learning for each student and the means of acquiring it. This accurate and detailed target setting is not yet a feature of all departments. The college is beginning to make good use of the range of data it has about individuals and groups of pupils to track, compare, predict and motivate at subject level and increasingly at whole college level. It is not yet sharing all academic information with tutors to enable them to accurately guide pupils across all subject areas.
- 71 Good procedures are in place for assessing those pupils with special education needs, although the college does not always effectively record pupils' progress as they are taught in lessons. The college makes suitable use of assessment information to plan further tasks matched to the pupils' individual needs.
- 72 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Teachers regularly share assessment results with pupils and identify what improvement is necessary. Pupils in many subjects recognise their level of work and are aware of their predicted grades.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

- 73 Good procedures are in place to assess the work of students in the sixth form. Departments have clear procedures that students understand. Work is regularly marked and students are given a clear picture of how they are progressing. Regular recording of results and effort grades are in place in all subjects. Good use is made of this information to identify where students have weaknesses and to help them improve. In some departments, such as biology, the procedures are very good with work frequently set, carefully marked and very quickly returned. Students value teacher comments and are confident that if there is a serious weakness in the quality of the work the tutor will make a point of discussing issues with the student.

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

- 74 Good guidance is provided for sixth form students. The daily contact with tutors in the sixth form common room ensures that students are well known and any changes in demeanour quickly noticed. Students benefit from having their own separate area, which includes the office of the head of sixth form and the careers office. However, the library is a long way from the sixth form house. Students are confident that their individual needs will be recognised and are usually secure in their approach to staff. They recognise that any problems, whether personal or academic, will usually be quickly and sensitively addressed. The quality of tutoring is variable, with some very good. Students are carefully helped to recognise their own effort and achievement

during the half-termly progress review checks. Each subject teacher writes about the exact progress each student is making towards his or her clearly identified target minimum grades. The college involves students in these checks, both during the interview and through requiring students to complete their own very detailed checklist to check their own progress. Consequently, students are clear about the improvement that is required and how to secure that improvement. The college provides good advice to help them choose their careers. Staff sensitively support their choices, guiding them towards relevant courses and helping them complete their applications. Students who have special education needs are very well integrated into all aspects of college life and work and are able to make good progress as a result of the advice and support they are given.

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

- 75 Parents are very supportive of the college and applaud its many strengths. They are universally fulsome in their praise of the quality of education provided, particularly commending the care taken of the pupils and students and the wealth of learning opportunities on offer. Parents recognise the college's deserved place at the heart of the community. The concerns expressed by a few parents about the information they receive about the progress of their children are no longer justified because the college has worked hard recently to improve the quality of annual reports. These are now good. Annual reports contain detailed description of the curriculum covered and give good information about the pupils' performances in tick box form. Many reports contain good general descriptions of what the pupil needs to do next to improve, but not all are precise enough or give advice about the different subjects.
- 76 The college welcomes parents. Staff commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents, listening carefully to their queries and diligently following up concerns. The welcome extended to parents and visitors by the office staff is very friendly and efficient. This initial welcome is further enhanced by the interesting and attractive college environment. The atmosphere in the entrance hall is delightful, giving the visitor the impression of a happy, business-like, but calm community. Displays around the college are lively, informative and invigorating and reflect the genuine community dimension of the college.
- 77 The college produces a very good range of general information for parents. The prospectus, annual governors report and termly newsletters are expertly produced and clearly reflect the rich variety that characterises the life of the college. Open evenings are held regularly helping parents learn about aspects of college life such as the way particular special educational needs are identified and addressed. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties are given good information about their children's progress, but are not always sufficiently involved in the review of their children's individual education plans.
- 78 The college actively encourages parents to involve themselves in college life. Parents are energetic in their support of school trips and volunteers are always forthcoming when required. Parents respond well to requests for artefacts from home. The superb Remembrance Day display in the school hall bears testament to the willingness of the parents and the community to support the college in any way they can.
- 79 The college makes regular use of student planners to help parents involve themselves in their children's learning. Planners convey messages effectively and personal tutors usually check them regularly. The college consulted parents before revising the new homework policy. Most staff are now using homework well to

promote pupils' learning at home.

- 80 The college has a few additional arrangements for ensuring that the needs of sixth form parents are met. At least two meetings are held before and during courses to inform parents about options, choices and career prospects. However, the college believes that by the age of 16, students should be taking increased responsibility for their own daily lives and future choices.

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

### **Leadership and management**

- 81 The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher promotes openness and honesty in his management style and has increased the involvement of key stage co-ordinators and team leaders in the leadership and management of the school. The best practice from the previous inspection has been preserved and changes have been steadily introduced and have secured the commitment of staff. He is very well supported by one deputy who works very hard along with other members of the head's team. All staff work hard to develop the curriculum within the context of a long-standing deficit budget. Their commitment to their pupils and the school is outstanding.
- 82 The previous inspection report praised the leadership of the then headteacher and recognised the key role that the school played in the local rural community. With the support of governors, the current headteacher has maintained the very positive ethos established by the previous headteacher and so is valued by the community. He has also sensitively dealt with issues that needed to be dealt with in order to improve teaching and learning. The school's aims are very clear and are reflected in practice. The result is that the school provides a very caring atmosphere in which all are encouraged to achieve and all are equally valued.
- 83 Strategic planning was identified as having some weaknesses during the previous inspection. The current plan for the school's development and improvement is good. It is based on a very thorough and honest review of the previous year's plan and takes account of local and national priorities. It is a working document that guides planning in subject teams and other areas of the school. Although the plan and department plans have identified success criteria to help with monitoring and evaluation, the criteria do not sufficiently describe improvements that will occur, particularly in standards, as a result of action taken.
- 84 The governors are a real strength of the school. They are knowledgeable, thoughtful and wise in balancing the needs of the community and the needs of the school. Working with the headteacher they have developed a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They skilfully manage what is a difficult financial situation; they ensure development and improvements happen whilst always keeping their eye on their plans to reduce the deficit. They are working closely with the LEA in managing this situation. Financial planning and management are very good and the school makes very good use of additional resources, for example, the money for pupils with special educational needs and the money for the literacy strategy.
- 85 Given the fragile nature of the budget, the impact of any decisions is significant. Governors do not always have enough information to help them understand the costs and benefits of any decisions made and to help them monitor and evaluate the impact of these decisions. For example, team leaders and senior managers do not have enough time to fulfil aspects of their role so there is not enough monitoring of

teaching and learning. The impact of this is that although teaching has improved since the previous inspection, there were not enough good and very good lessons because very good teachers cannot share their good practice. Governors know that they still do not meet the statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11.

- 86 Over the last two years there has been a lot of work done in establishing a system for collecting data on pupils' test and examination results and predicting what they might achieve in subsequent tests. Each teacher now has very detailed information about all pupils to help them plan their teaching. The use of this information is not monitored to ensure that it is being used both to plan and to check on the progress that pupils are making. Having the data has meant that the school is more confident in setting targets for test and examination results. It also means that it can show how well it is doing when examination results vary year on year because of the small number of pupils in a year group. Using data is still at an early stage of development for most team leaders and their teams, but a start has been made in looking at the value added by subjects in the sixth form. Progress has been limited by the lack of reliable and available technology to support this work. With limits on spending, the college has not been able to purchase software to support its collection and analysis of management information.
- 87 The headteacher and governors are very familiar with the principles of best value and are applying them well. They compare their performance and costs with other schools; they do challenge themselves about their provision and do ask the question about the viability of the sixth form. They do consult parents and pupils and students and use competitive tendering appropriately.

## **Staffing**

- 88 Because overall there are not enough teachers in the school, the staffing is judged to be just satisfactory. In order to maintain class sizes across the range of subjects in line with the national average, almost all teachers teach more lessons than their counterparts nationally and some individual teachers have very little non-teaching time. There is a good match of teachers to classes they teach in almost all departments. In religious education, non-specialists are deployed effectively as a result of clear guidance from the head of department and previous experience in teaching the subject. However, in design and technology, the need to share a technician with information and communication technology adversely affects the department's ability to use resources effectively for teaching. Although most of the non-specialists teaching ICT have taken advantage of training, there is occasionally less effective teaching because there are some large classes.
- 89 The school has effectively conducted its threshold assessments and a system for performance management for teachers is in place. However, the school has yet to implement the first cycle of this process. The school has good systems to help teachers new to the school to become familiar with procedures and the school's vision. Professional development days are used effectively for all staff and other in-service training is allocated to make the most impact on the school's priorities. The school has usually been effective in appointing good new staff in recent years. Whilst the school has not employed newly qualified teachers for a number of years, it is a good partner school for initial teacher training. The administrative staff makes a very good contribution to the smooth running and the image of the school.

## **Accommodation**

- 90 Overall, accommodation is satisfactory despite there being no spare space and a lack of social areas for pupils. Library accommodation is good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory in art because there is only one room with a kiln, therefore that room is not effective for teaching both two and three -dimensional work. Lack of soundproofing in music means that pupils involved in preparatory activities must do so in an adversely noisy environment. Whilst there is enough adequate accommodation for mathematics and modern foreign languages, the use of temporary classrooms hinders the sharing of good practice. The school is currently building an extra laboratory for science and plans have been approved for new classrooms that will ease the situation generally and particularly in mathematics. The school is a pleasant, tidy and clean environment, conducive to effective learning. Displays are of a very high quality.

## **Resources for learning**

- 91 Resources are satisfactory overall, with some improvements being made since the last inspection. Good resources have a positive effect on attainment in religious education, but there are shortages of text-books in English, science and geography. In the last report, resources in geography were described as insufficient.
- 92 The number of computers in the college is close to the national average. There are few computers in subject areas, which prevents pupils from taking full advantage of modern technologies to support their learning. The library provides a welcoming study area and the librarian appointed in April 2000 encourages extensive use throughout the day and borrowing rates are good. Pupils receive good, well-structured training in basic library information skills, topic research and valuable independent learning skills. The library is well appointed and fiction for the lower school is good. Reference books for GCSE and A-level English and art are good. There is no obvious focus on multicultural fiction that is needed if the college is going to successfully raise pupils' awareness of the multicultural world. Many departments enrich the curriculum by using resources outside school, such as museums, field centres and local colleges.

## **Sixth form**

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

- 93 There is considerable support for the sixth form from members of the school and the local community. The sixth form is led by a very committed head of sixth, who is well liked and respected by students. Supported by the senior management team he has secured the commitment of all staff to provide a quite extensive range of advanced courses. Monitoring of students' performance is good, although monitoring of other aspects of the sixth form such as teaching and the curriculum are severely constrained by lack of time. The governing body plays a good part in the leadership of the sixth form and the college plans very carefully so that courses can run according to students' preferences. Students have equal access to courses provided they fulfil the entry requirement of four grade C levels at GCSE. However, there is not yet suitable provision for lower attaining students and those with special educational needs that would benefit from further study in a familiar environment. The sixth form currently lacks a statement about how it will contribute to the curriculum from 14 to 19 year-olds. Without this vision there is no view about the curriculum that students are entitled to in the sixth form.

## Resources

- 94 Students have lessons in the same accommodation as pupils in the main school. They have a comfortable common room and quiet area that are large enough to provide suitable places to relax and to study. Students almost always have access to a computer suite that is near their common room. The sixth form provision is satisfactory with sufficient numbers of computers and reference books. The connection to the Internet in 1999 has improved access to a wider range of resources for A level study.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 95 Because this is a good school there are only four key issues for the main school and three for the sixth form.
- (1) Introduce more systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the curriculum.  
(Paras 48, 85, 93, 156, 195, 213, 220, 228)
  - (2) Ensure that the arrangements for providing religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 meet statutory requirements.  
(Paras 41, 43, 53, 85)
  - (3) Extend the use of computers for pupils' and students' learning.  
(Paras 148, 156, 180, 195, 197, 205)
  - (4) Prepare all pupils to live and work in our culturally diverse world.  
(Paras 57, 99, 187)

## Sixth form

- (1) Improve the arrangements for and the teaching of key skills.  
(Paras 14, 24, 61)
- (2) Extend the range of courses and opportunities available to students in addition to advanced courses.  
(Paras 58, 60, 61, 93, 188)
- (3) Identify and plan for making more creative use of the time available for teaching and learning.  
(Paras 60, 214)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	111
	Sixth form	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		43

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	8	20	47	27	9	0	0
Percentage	7	18	43	24	8	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	0	12	13	7	0	0	0
Percentage	0	37	41	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. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form here as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.*

### 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	519	51
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	36	na

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	36	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	111	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<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	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	55	51	106

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	41	44
	Girls	40	35	37
	Total	75	76	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (76)	72 (70)	76 (68)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (26)	46 (40)	56 (26)
	National	32 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	41	42
	Girls	36	38	40
	Total	65	79	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (67)	72 (74)	76 (74)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (28)	46 (63)	45 (38)
	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
	2000	36	36	72

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	13	33	34
	Girls	22	34	36
	Total	35	67	70
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49 (59)	93 (94)	97 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42 (45)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	19
	National	NA

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	9	27	36

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	7.5	15.2	13.3 (18.0)	2.0	1.0	1.3 (2.0)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	20
	National	76.5

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	570
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	45	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	298

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	26.3
Key Stage 4	22.6
Sixth form	10.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 628 721
Total expenditure	1 649 179
Expenditure per pupil	2894
Balance brought forward from previous year	-54 838
Balance carried forward to next year	-75 296

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.8

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

64.7

Number of questionnaires sent out

570

Number of questionnaires returned

369

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	7	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	54	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	56	7	3	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	13	6	3
The teaching is good.	31	60	3	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	40	25	5	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	41	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	43	4	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	41	22	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	35	47	6	2	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	56	4	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	46	7	1	6

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Forty-six parents attended the parents' meeting and the majority of comments were supportive of the school. They were satisfied overall with the standards that pupils and students reach. They thought that the school does build the confidence of pupils and values them as individuals. They praised the school's arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs and the school's pastoral arrangements. Although there was some concern about behaviour on the buses, they thought that behaviour in school was good. Some parents thought that there were inconsistencies in the amount of homework that was being set and some would like more information on the curriculum in the college. Music, English, the use of computers and special educational needs were identified as having improved. Concern was expressed about the lack of money for further developments, particular in the areas associated with the arts.

## 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

- The teaching is good.
- The writing of more able pupils in Years 10 and 11 often displays real flair.
- The marking of pupils' work and the targets set are helping them to improve their standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- The work for some pupils in Years 7 to 9 is occasionally too easy for them.
- The attainment of boys is still not high enough.

- 96 Results in tests for pupils at the age of 14 were equal to the national average in 2001 and close to the 2000 figures. The results are well below similar schools because the proportion of special educational needs pupils is increasing and this, together with the small entry, tends to distort the figures. GCSE results in English and in English literature were below average in 2000, but improved in 2001. Trends over time show wide variations for the same reasons as in end of Year 9 tests. The attainment of the boys at 14 and at 16 is low. However, this could be due to the majority of the pupils with special educational needs being boys'. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in the college and many of the higher attaining pupils do well in examinations.
- 97 Standards seen in lessons in both key stages largely reflect the results recorded in 2001. Pupils are articulate and in Years 7 to 9 both boys and girls are prepared to take a full part in class discussions. They have a good knowledge of different types of language and can recognise the difference between slang and more literary language. For instance, when discussing poetry they consider the effect of words they use to describe characters: one student said: "*a hard nut, but with a soft centre - that's like something in a chocolate box*". They are able to contrast this with the more formal narrative elements in *Flour Babies*. Listening skills are not as well established in all classes and the lack of concentration shown by a minority of pupils, mainly boys, inhibits their learning. Teachers have to work hard to channel the boys' energies into constructive work. There are not enough systematic links with the drama department to set up a more consistent approach to improving speaking and listening as interrelated skills.
- 98 In Years 10 and 11, pupils listen better, but some boys are reluctant to translate their good ideas into writing. They respond well orally to the teacher's questions and are made to think beyond the obvious first answer that comes into their heads. Teachers are determined to help pupils to develop their vocabulary and structure the lessons well to allow time for discussion. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils are well taught and they express particularly good ideas in discussion work. Their attitude to writing is less positive and they have to be cajoled to produce even the minimum effort.
- 99 Standards in reading are as expected at both key stages. The college provides time for pupils to read each week in a 15-minute period and this is supplemented in Years 7 to 9 by regular lessons in the library. Pupils have a good supply of

interesting reading material, although there is a lack of suitable books to show the rich multi-cultural variety of literature. Pupils enjoy listening to the excellent reading of their teachers. Younger pupils read with verve and obviously enjoy books. They try to bring the dialogue to life with voice changes and a good sense of character. In Year 8, two pairs of boys and girls had planned a dramatic version of *Nooligan and Streemin'*, which was very effective. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are keen to read parts in plays and convey the sense well, but some would benefit from rehearsal time to prepare the more difficult speeches, for example from Shakespeare. Two older pupils read confidently in an assembly on the theme of remembrance. Pupils are good at research and can read to find information from many sources. This is shown in their homework tasks.

- 100 Overall, writing is average in all years, although the higher attaining pupils perform well. In Years 7 to 9, there is some very good factual writing linked to geography and produced using desk top publishing of a high quality. In this, pupils write about the attractions of their own area and illustrate it with maps and pictures imported from the Internet. Using a word processor helps many of the weaker writers to get a better idea of how to plan their writing in paragraphs. The main weaknesses in writing result from carelessness and lack of thought in the spelling. Teachers are starting to introduce drafting books and this is having a positive effect, as is the emphasis on displaying good quality writing by pupils to attract readers.
- 101 In Years 10 and 11, some of the higher attaining pupils have a real flair for writing. They use sharply chosen vocabulary: "*Why had this happened? What was the catalyst?*" Their imagery is simple, but effective: "*a small faced girl with thick rimmed spectacles and a brightly coloured brace.*" Literature essays are well constructed using planning ideas from the teachers. They show good skills in information and communication technology in their assignments on the media. However, too many pupils, often boys of average ability, are careless and make too little effort in their writing. They need firmer direction to ensure that they produce the work in class to a set time.
- 102 The college has made a satisfactory start to introducing the new literacy strategy in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are well planned with the intentions made clear during prompt and clear introductions. Pupils know what is expected of them and the recently produced guidance booklets for pupils, which explain in simple language how they can raise their levels of attainment, are very good indeed. Teachers need to build in time to allow a final summing up of lessons so that pupils realise how much or little progress has been made in their learning. Other subjects in the curriculum have something to learn from the planning structure suggested by the literacy strategy. At present, only art, geography and science consolidate pupils' literacy skills in a consistent way.
- 103 The quality of teaching in English is good. It is more consistently good in Years 10 and 11 because the work is more carefully planned to meet the individual needs of the pupils. For instance, in some lessons different tasks are set for boys and girls in poetry. This picks up their particular interests and motivates them. The activities are varied and brisk, including whole class discussion, group work and role-play with presentations at the end. In many lessons in Years 7 to 9, the tasks tend to be the same for all with not enough acknowledgement of the different ability range, except in the marking of completed work. As a result, higher attaining pupils sometimes become bored and distracted. The marking is very good. Teachers offer useful suggestions such as "*Vary the sentence length and then read it aloud.*" Pupils are clearly informed of their progress in their books.

- 104 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and teachers use well constructed writing frames to support them. The deployment of the support staff is also carefully planned.
- 105 The English department has undergone many recent staff changes. The leadership of the department is sound. There is a clear vision shared by all teachers for raising standards using information from pupils' previous work to set realistic targets for both boys and girls. Most of the strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained.

## Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is sound.

### Strengths

- The teaching is imaginative and pupils respond well.
- The subject makes a real contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

### Areas for improvement

- The lack of a consistent teaching area appropriate for drama.

- 106 Drama is a separate subject for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. Large numbers take the subject at GCSE. Results in recent examinations at GCSE have been equal to the national average.
- 107 Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are average. Pupils enjoy drama, but the concentration of the boys varies from class to class. Many pupils lack poise and confidence in drama, but most improve over the course and develop good social skills. In one lesson, helped by skilful teacher intervention - "*What made that scene effective? Yes, they found some real activity to do while they were speaking*" - they learned a great deal about stage-craft. By the end of the lesson many were able to create impressive cameos showing good characterisation and subtle use of language. The timing of some able pupils was very good. Pupils evaluate their performances at the end of each lesson, but many would have benefited from more discussion about their techniques during the lesson.
- 108 Older pupils, often in large groups, make distinct improvement from Year 10 to Year 11. In Year 10, many pupils lack the confidence to read out their monologues in role, although by the end of the lesson they understand more clearly the needs of their audience. They practise a variety of techniques and, supported by the teacher, develop a better idea of how to present their work. In Year 11, they collaborate well in groups and plan quite ambitious scripts and actions for their examination pieces. The work of the special educational needs pupils is particularly impressive. They make good progress in their speaking and listening skills.
- 109 Teaching is always at least sound and at times good. The teacher knows the pupils well and plans for their individual needs carefully. He has a very good manner with them and helps them to develop their skills in a systematic way during the lesson. The resources used, including video and picture stimulus, are effective in helping pupils to understand different dramatic conventions. Not a great deal of continuous evaluation was observed during the inspection and this would help pupils to modify their ideas more easily as they plan their work. The teaching and learning are hampered at times by the fact that the hall is required for examinations.

- 110 Drama makes a very positive contribution to pupils' social and personal development through lessons and extra curricular clubs. Collaborative work is good and boys and girls from a range of ability groups get on well together and work harmoniously. There are good links with outside agencies and the community at large. Productions are staged to give pupils good opportunities to practise their skills before an audience.

## MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average and better than those in similar schools.
- Standards of attainment in most lessons are at least in line with national expectations.
- Where teaching is imaginative, the attitudes of pupils are always at least satisfactory and often good or excellent.
- Teaching is often very good and sometimes excellent.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

### Areas for development

- Standards of attainment in class groups, where teaching is rarely better than satisfactory over time.
- Teaching so that all teachers teach as well as the best.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- The sharing of the very good practice seen in a significant number of lessons.

- 111 In 2001, the results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average and better than similar schools. They are not as good as those in science and broadly in line with those in English. They have been at least in line with the national average over recent years. Standards seen in lessons in Year 9 reflect these results with no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory by the end of Year 9.
- 112 In 2000, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 11 gaining grades A\*-C and grades A\*-C were broadly in line with the national averages, maintaining the trend of recent years. However, in 2001 the proportion for A\*-C dipped to below the national average. Throughout recent years, the results have been below most of the other subjects within the school. However, standards in lessons are broadly in line with the national expectation and there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory in Year 11.
- 113 Pupils enter the school with attainment levels that are just above the national average. By the end of Year 9, pupils are achieving at least in line with expectation. Most achieve higher than could be expected, whilst a few achieve lower. The standards pupils reach are dependent on the quality of the teaching they receive and there are not enough lessons where teaching is good or better. There are a small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory because of slow pace, a lack of variety in teaching methods and an inability to manage pupils. Where teaching is good, pupils reach good standards. For example, in a lessons on factorising algebraic expressions the teacher captured the pupils' imagination by saying "I like 8 and 12. What do you like?" Pupils offered numbers they liked and the teacher rejected some and accepted others, keeping a list on the board. Once

the pupils realised that all the numbers were in the four times table, the teacher used other imaginative strategies to help pupils make rapid progress. By the end of the lesson they produced work in algebra of a high quality for their age. Similarly, pupils of just below average ability in a lesson on bearings made good progress in their learning. The teacher's use of high quality resources, including maps of the local area, stimulated pupils to plot journeys from given bearings using the teacher's imaginary helicopter to reach towns where the pupils live. As a result of the teacher's high expectations of all pupils, these pupils learned mathematics at a high level for their age. This is mainly due to sharing the lesson's learning objectives with them from the beginning and the good pace and structure of activities.

- 114 In contrast, pupils in the highest group, whilst still working at an almost appropriate standard, added and subtracted numbers with whole and fractional components with little confidence. The teacher's use of rote methods to help with this activity and the task of converting these numbers entirely into fractions lacked the help of pictorial stimulation or the context of real life. Lower ability pupils are competent with basic arithmetic and can use positive and negative numbers, but not all understand permutations or the use of decimals. Pupils with special educational needs attain in line with their ability. Although specific targets for mathematics are not identified for these pupils, support assistants and teachers are aware of their general needs and help them progress satisfactorily.
- 115 By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of pupils' work is in line with the national expectation. Most pupils of average ability achieve standards higher than could be expected, whilst a few of the most able pupils and a few of the least able pupils work at standards below their natural levels. This trend is similar to that at the end of Year 9 and is a direct result of the effectiveness of individual teachers. Most of the able pupils work at high levels. Those able pupils, however, who have less natural interest in mathematics are often not motivated to learn because the teaching lacks a variety of approaches, resources and management skills. Less able pupils understand how to compile frequency tables from tally charts because there is a real context to the work. However, in a lesson seen some lost interest and behaved unsatisfactorily because the teacher took too long to explain adding fractions with different denominators. Particularly as this was revision work, a different and livelier approach was needed to motivate these pupils, many of whom made no progress in consolidating their ability to use fractions.
- 116 Pupils of average ability almost always achieve well. They are able to multiply out difficult brackets in algebra because the teacher imaginatively uses the idea of different coloured sweets to represent unknown quantities in algebra. The involvement of pupils to packet them, pool them together, then give them to one person to eat, attracted and maintained interest. Pupils with a variety of special educational needs almost always work at a standard in line with their ability. This is because teachers have the support of assistants who are aware of pupils' needs. The learning support assistants have the time to help pupils understand what is required in the task and cajole pupils to keep working on an individual basis.
- 117 The attitudes and progress of pupils are directly linked to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is slow-paced and unimaginative, attitudes are sometimes unsatisfactory. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers are usually good or better. However, teachers sometimes feel that they can only maintain what they think of as a good relationship if they do not challenge pupils who are not working hard enough. Where teaching is stimulating with high expectations from the teacher, then pupils show enthusiasm and make good progress. In a lesson with the lowest ability group in Year 10, pupils were keenly



interested in calculating the total points score over a series of games for football teams. They used a formula scoring three points for a win and one for a draw to calculate these correctly. The use of pre-prepared grids to complete the results allowed pupils to appreciate that the team with the most wins did not necessarily win the league if they did not back this up with sufficient wins. This cleverly disguised teaching of algebra was further supported by using calculators effectively to square and cube numbers coded as letters. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, made significant progress. These pupils also had effective support from an assistant.

- 118 Teaching is often very good. However, it is too often no more than satisfactory with the same pupils over long periods of time because pupils are currently taught by the same teacher from Year 7 to Year 11. In a minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory.
- 119 Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are thorough. Advice for lesson planning and a writing frame to assist pupils in problem solving is helpful. Morale has been well maintained in recent years despite staffing difficulties. An effective assessment system is in place using levelled tests in the earlier years and practice and module tests from the GCSE course. However, there are still not enough opportunities for all teachers to talk more about levels of learning to pupils in classes and to promote more problem solving. This still needs developing from the previous inspection. The less effective teachers do not follow the good guidelines for lesson planning in the departmental handbook. The new numeracy strategy is taking place, but all teachers do not always use the best practice in numeracy teaching. Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory as half of the teachers work in temporary accommodation away from the main school, adversely affecting support.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good in all years.
- Results at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.
- GCSE results are above the national average.
- Leadership and management by the head of science are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The subject specific advice in books or reports.
- Monitoring of teaching.
- Use of computers to enhance teaching and learning.

- 120 In 2000, test results for 14 year-olds were above the national average. Further improvement in 2001 places the school further above the average for all schools nationally and well above those schools with similar intakes. These results are better than those achieved in English or mathematics. Results have been improving over the past three years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work confirm these high standards.
- 121 Lessons are carefully prepared, pupils have a positive attitude to their learning and teacher assessments are accurate. High attaining pupils have good experimental

skills and can carry out and report effectively on investigations in biological, chemical and physical contexts. They can explain frictional forces in physics, predator-prey relationships in biology, and in chemistry, they can explain how collisions affect rates of reaction. Low attainers and those with special educational needs are pushed hard and can give the quality of explanations of photosynthesis and respiration that might be expected from older pupils. Their overall understanding of science is good, though they have difficulty with some aspects of what they study in physics. All pupils make very good progress through the Key Stage.

- 122 GCSE results were above the national average in 2000 and improved in 2001, with over 61 per cent achieving the higher grades. The trend is upwards and results have improved since the last inspection. Pupils do better in science than in their other subjects. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work confirm these high standards. However, the analysis of examination results show that performance in the chemistry aspect is not as strong as in the other aspects related to physics and biology.
- 123 Structured lessons, good subject knowledge, a variety of activities, very good pupil teacher relationships and an emphasis on learning, all combine to make learning in science an enjoyable and rewarding activity. High attainers develop their investigative skills to a very high level. They have a deep understanding of electricity and can demonstrate this by explaining how electrical resistance depends upon the length and thickness of the wire carrying an electric current. Knowledge and understanding of the biology aspect are particularly strong. Lessons in biology produce enthralled pupils, whose learning is greatly enhanced as they wonder at the marvels of nature and their own place in the wider scheme of things. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of cells. They can describe their structure and functions and explain the processes of transpiration, osmosis and diffusion. In chemistry, pupils can use their knowledge of atomic structure to explain the reactivity of metals. However, they do not respond to chemistry as well as they do to the other aspects of science and consequently, do not make the same rapid progress. Pupils do not understand that impure substances melt at lower temperatures than pure ones and so they cannot fully explain the use of cryolite in the industrial extraction of aluminium. The combination of the single science and rural science courses enables low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to make very good progress. Boys and girls produce work of equivalent standards.
- 124 Literacy skills are strongly developed throughout the school and contribute to learning in science. Oral feedback and discussions are regular features with appropriate scientific vocabulary a necessity. There is very little copying. Pupils record their own observations and frequently write extended stories or indeed produce poetry. Pupils use charts, tables and graphs in an effective manner to illustrate and interpret their findings. The use of computers for the presentation of work, data-logging and the recording of data is developing, but is hindered by a shortage of computers in laboratories and the fact that it is difficult to obtain time in the computer rooms.
- 125 Teaching is very good overall. This has improved from the last inspection. Over half the lessons were at least very good and only a very small proportion were unsatisfactory. Pupils' very good progress reflects this high quality teaching. Teaching in the department has many strong features. Very good pupil teacher relationships give pupils the confidence to join in discussions and a willingness to learn from mistakes. Planning and organisation are very good, giving lessons focus

and pace. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to ask probing questions to make pupils think and become fully involved in their own learning. The very good or excellent lessons begin with an initial stimulus to get pupils involved, then learning objectives are shared to give a focus for the lesson. A variety of timed activities are used to maintain pace and the teacher carries out frequent checks of understanding and learning. The lessons end with pupils explaining what they have learned so the teacher can check that learning objectives have been achieved. Teaching is carefully structured according to the needs of the class. For example, in one excellent lesson, less able pupils achieved very high levels of understanding of photosynthesis and respiration because the teacher had prepared easily readable, step-wise questions. These lessons are models of good practice. The unsatisfactory lessons had some structure, but lacked direction and pace. The introduction would be too long causing some pupils to lose interest and to begin talking off task. Practical activities would be rushed and not completed, causing pupils to hurriedly copy notes and the final plenary would then be very brief or non-existent.

- 126 Pupils are enthusiastic experimenters. They are keen to learn, willing to join in discussions and take a pride in their own learning and the presentation of their work. They like science and fully reflect the enthusiasm of their teachers.
- 127 Leadership and management are very good. The assessment system is very effectively used to monitor the progress of pupils and to monitor teaching. Teachers' assessments are accurate. All pupils' work is marked, graded and given praise, but helpful subject specific comments are rarely given in books or reports. The heavy workload of the head of department makes it difficult to monitor teaching. Schemes of work are well set out and additional material is available for high attainers and those with special educational needs. Improvement since the last inspection is good. All the issues raised have been addressed. Scientific investigative work is the basis of most work in the department and constructive homework deepens and extends understanding.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is well planned, with a good balance of theory and practical work.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- Assessment is thorough and the support given matches pupils' needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate to further develop the full range of media opportunities.
- Further development of three-dimensional work.
- Further development in the use of computers throughout the department.

- 128 Teacher assessment shows that pupils' standards of attainment at the age of 14 are in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* - C in GCSE examinations in 2000 was below the national average. Results in 2001 are better than those in 2000, with girls performing better than boys.
- 129 In the work seen during the inspection, the standards of attainment by the time pupils are 14 are in line with national expectations for pupils of the same age nationally with girls achieving similar to boys. Year 9 pupils are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their work. They observe well from direct observation

and understand three-dimensional concepts. They are able to explore ideas and assess visual information, including images and artefacts from different historical and cultural contexts.

- 130 In a Year 9 lesson using Egyptian Jewellery as a resource reference, pupils showed the ability to arrange and enlarge images and had a good understanding of spatial layout. They experimented with relief designs and showed the ability to simplify images and consider textural surfaces. Work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first hand observation as a basis for their work. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good attainment levels, benefiting from individual attention.
- 131 By the time pupils are 16, their work is at a good standard: they can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work and often demonstrate personal interests. They use sketchbooks effectively and consider language and vocabulary in lessons. They effectively combine observation with a range of secondary sources and pupils often show the influence of important movements in art, or particular artists. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils spoke confidently about their work with good knowledge and understanding. Work from direct observational studies was being well-developed through the study of faces by Arcimboldo.
- 132 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good throughout. This is a direct result of the high expectations and enthusiasm that the teacher brings to his work and the high standards he sets. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and apply themselves purposefully. There is an effective working ethos and pupils behave and do their best. They want to improve and do well and are eager to explain their work to classmates and visitors alike.
- 133 The quality of teaching is always good, often very good, and has improved since the last inspection. Lessons are well planned with time set aside to ensure that all pupils know and understand what they are expected to learn both in the lesson and for homework. The preparation and implementation of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are most effective. There is good use of subject knowledge and subject expertise and due emphasis is given to procedures, methods and care of equipment. The planning of lessons provides sufficient detail for pupils of different abilities. The level of challenge is high and content is now sufficiently matched to boys' interests. In a Year 7 lesson on personal identity, the teacher made effective use of mirrors for face studies. He made reference to Lucian Freud to illustrate tonal variations and as a result pupils experimented well with the colour mixing of flesh tones. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher and pupils discussed the preparation for the mock examination at length. He issued planning sheets and highlighted time allocations. Pupils used direct observational studies most effectively in a coursework project on composition and made appropriate art history connections. Homework is good in all years.
- 134 The subject is well led and managed. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear and ICT is now being developed within the schemes of work. Since the last inspection, written aims and objectives that link programmes of study and teaching approaches have been established. Assessment is effective and informs curriculum planning. There is limited access to computers within the department. The stocks of reference materials held within the department are satisfactory. Accommodation is poor and does not allow for work on a large scale or visual stimulation through facilities for display in 2D and 3D. Technical help, storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of pupils'

work. The library provision for good quality reference books fully meets the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. The new head of department has achieved much in a short time to raise the image of art in the college. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Assessment procedures have been refined in order to ensure pupils have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievement and to set targets for future development more effectively. Art history and research have moved forward. Year 9 pupils now have access to a wider range of materials and are more aware of different art techniques. A more structured approach to media choice is given in Year 11 and there is a greater awareness of raising boys' attainment.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above the national average with a significant number of A\* and A grades.
- All pupils achieve well and do better in design and technology examinations than in most of the other subjects they take.
- Teaching is good. The structured programmes of work and individual support in lessons enable all pupils to carry out the tasks set.
- Many coursework folders for GCSE show a high standard of content and presentation.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work in design and technology.
- Developing good use of computers for both designing and making.

### Areas for improvement

- The working space and storage available.
- The high group numbers in Years 7, 10 and 11.
- The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Opportunities for pupils to appreciate the contribution that design and technology can provide for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

135 By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments suggest that attainment is very high and well above the national average, but this appears to be an over-estimate of pupils' performance. Current work indicates that standards are in line with the national average. Standards at GCSE, in terms of the percentage of A\*-C and A\*-G grades, are above the national average. Results for the different design and technology subjects vary and in 2000 were well above the national average in resistant materials and graphics. However, results in 2001 are more consistent across all of the design and technology subjects and in line with the national average. Boys achieve well above the national average for boys and better than girls. Both boys and girls gained a significant proportion of A grades. Both girls and boys achieved a higher proportion of A\*-G grades than their national average and this indicates that all pupils, including those with special needs, are benefiting from the good individual teaching which is taking place. Pupils continue to achieve better in their design and technology examinations than in most of the other subjects they take at GCSE.

136 Attainment in the lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory and, together with folders of pupils' previous work, this indicates that attainment overall is still above the national average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, develop knowledge related to the use of a range of materials and components. They have good opportunities to engage in the whole design process as they progress through the school. This results in good coursework, in terms of both content and presentation, and well-made practical projects. There is increasing

good use of computers to enhance both design work and the manufacturing of pupils' products. Higher attaining pupils often produce very good coursework in terms of both content and presentation.

- 137 All pupils achieve well in both designing and making as they move through the school because the curriculum for all of the design technology subjects is well structured and well taught. The design process is introduced early in Year 7, knowledge is developed and the quality of research, development of ideas and presentation of work and practical work improves as pupils move through the school. For example, in Year 8, pupils produce a number of designs for a plastic clock face and use computer equipment to manufacture aspects of their designs. By Year 9, pupils' recording of their work is good. Pupils enjoy researching and developing their ideas and demonstrate good practical skills when making their designed work in a variety of materials. For example, in the Year 9 bread-making project, ingredients for making bread are researched and well-presented folders are produced as well as some very good practical work. The structured approach used by teachers to address coursework in Years 10 and 11 is enabling all pupils to meet the requirements of the examination and achieve well. In the best folders, the quality of research, analysis, and development and evaluation of ideas is very good. Pupils develop knowledge and skills and understand how materials and ingredients can be used safely, effectively and sometimes creatively in the development of their own ideas. Presentation of work is often very good and there is good use of computer-generated work in all design and technology subjects. Practical work is often very good because a range of skills are used well to produce well finished products which meet the specifications set out in design work. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils of lower prior attainment, make good progress because they are well supported through individual help and advice. This enables them to apply their technical abilities well.
- 138 Overall, teaching is good. It is always satisfactory or better and sometimes is very good. Teachers have very good technical knowledge and a clear understanding of National Curriculum requirements. This enables focused teaching, including demonstrations that set high expectation of pupils' work, and is very effective in guiding and reinforcing pupils learning. For example, in a Year 11 food technology lesson pupils had been very well prepared for their practical work. This enabled the teacher to provide very effective individual support within the lesson whilst at the same time managing pupils and resources well and having high expectations of pupils' performance.
- 139 Overall planning is good, but some lessons are not planned in enough detail to focus effectively on pupils' learning. For example, in several lessons, pupils' learning was not sufficiently guided by setting timed tasks and explaining the marking criteria for pupils finished work. In most lessons, time is used well, pupils are managed well and a range of teaching methods are used very effectively. A particular strength of good teaching is the individual support that pupils receive in most lessons because this enables pupils of all abilities to focus their learning and make progress. Some basic skills in the use of language and number are being included in pupils' work, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practice these skills in a progressive and planned way. Marking of work is consistent and the regular assessment of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 is effective in helping pupils to improve their work.
- 140 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Most pupils respond well to teachers' expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well in their work. However, when work targets are not sufficiently clear some pupils can lack concentration and

productivity and pace of working is affected. Most pupils concentrate very well in lessons and many Year 10 and 11 pupils spend considerable time and effort outside of lessons in improving their work. The success of lower ability pupils is a positive reflection of the effort and concentration that they give to their work.

- 141 Close co-operation between teachers enables them to develop good courses and maintain standards. Departmental documentation is sound, but here the department does not monitor enough to provide information that would enable it to develop and improve its practice. Teachers' assessments for the end of Year 9 are very high and current procedures do not ensure that assessments are a true reflection of pupils' designing and making capability. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, but because there are only three design and technology teachers their teaching load is high. There is not enough technician support, which affects teachers' ability to plan work and organise workshop facilities. Teachers work very hard to make effective use of available accommodation, but resistant materials rooms are cluttered because there is not enough storage. This, combined with high pupil numbers in Years 7,10 and 11, poses a potential health and safety hazard. Resources are satisfactory overall with good access to computer equipment, although some machines are becoming outdated and in need of replacement. Hard work in obtaining computer equipment by participating in a national project has improved design and technology facilities.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is very good as a result of a wide range of learning experiences that contribute to the high standards that pupils of all abilities achieve.

### Strengths

- Test and examination results are well above the national average.
- Teaching that involves all pupils in their learning.
- Good use of fieldwork.
- Involvement of pupils in presenting and discussing ideas and information.
- The increased use of computers as a part of learning activities.

### Areas for improvement

- The progress and attainment of more able pupils in individual lessons.
- The monitoring of teaching in order to share good practice.
- The updating of resources for teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of in-depth comment on key pieces of pupils' work, especially in Years 10 and 11.

- 142 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2000 show that standards are well above those found nationally, but with girls achieving more of the higher grades. Results for 2001 indicate that standards have been maintained, but with no difference in the performance of boys and girls. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good as a result of the support they receive.

- 143 Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were well above the standards achieved by all schools nationally. The results for 2001 show a further improvement. There was no clear difference in the pattern of boys and girls grades. These very good standards are reflected in the attainment of pupils with special educational needs and several achieved above predicated grades. The very good standards of attainment found at the time of the last inspection have therefore, been maintained.

- 144 The good standards that many pupils achieve in lessons reflect the positive attitude they have towards the subject. Both boys and girls across the ability range enjoy the subject and want to do well. They answer clearly during discussions and teachers make good use of discussion to support understanding. Pupils work well in pairs to collect information and to identify reasons to support their ideas. The positive impact on learning that is the result of this approach is evident in the way that Year 10 pupils check ideas with a partner before completing a diagram to summarise the causes and effects of processes of erosion in Nepal. However, not enough use is made of pupils working in groups to develop ideas and collect information. Fieldwork is integrated into learning activities and is effective in promoting a good understanding of topics, for example urban areas, as well as river and coastal environments. Good use is made of the local town to enable pupils to link their studies of human and natural features to the area in which they live. The use of visits to the local area linked to pupils' local knowledge is very effective in promoting good understanding. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection.
- 145 Lessons are clearly structured with tasks provided that keep most pupils fully involved. This ensures that pupils of all abilities are able to complete the same range of learning activities. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all lessons because teachers are fully aware of their individual learning needs. This ensures they make good progress in discussion work, where one Year 9 student provided some well thought-out ideas about the life of children in a large Indian city. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to use geographical terms accurately and to write clear, descriptive answers. For example, Year 7 pupils used a range of descriptive words, 'the silence is broken by screeching, squealing and many other strange sounds', to describe how a remote rainforest area might be viewed by an explorer. Through this emphasis on written standards, the subject is promoting and supporting the development of literacy standards.
- 146 Pupils develop a good knowledge of processes that create different environments and can identify and describe their human and natural features. For example, Year 8 pupils respond very positively to an investigation into the Savannah environment and show good understanding of the impact of this environment on the development of a region of Kenya. Maps, diagrams and video clips are used to develop good understanding of each topic. Pupils' standards of presentation are good with information recorded accurately on maps and diagrams. This enables Year 11 pupils to record information accurately following a visit to study the different areas of a local town. However, pupils are not encouraged to be independent learners through the selection of their own methods to record, display and analyse information. In Year 9, pupils are encouraged to confront the social issues related to the lives of those of their own age living in the poorest areas of large South American cities. This effective introduction to the study of population provides a very good foundation for pupils' study of people and places in Year 10 and reflects the good quality subject planning. By the end of Year 11, teachers have prepared all pupils thoroughly for the GCSE examination and this focus on examination technique is an important influence on the high standards that many pupils achieve.
- 147 Consistently good teaching with some very good teaching within parts of individual lessons is a strength of the subject. Where teaching is very good, teachers clearly explain the activities that will be undertaken, set clearly defined time targets and have clear expectations that pupils will include their own evidence and ideas in written and discussion tasks. Very good subject knowledge enables teachers to respond accurately to pupils' questions. Lessons are planned to match the requirements of the syllabus and this ensures that pupils are well prepared for the



tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11 respectively. Good planning exists to match tasks to pupils' individual levels of ability, but there is a need to review the use of additional tasks for the most able pupils.

- 148 The subject leader provides very good leadership and support for the development of the subject. The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' investigations related to each topic is a developing strength. However, the rather limited access to computers means that pupils cannot collect, process and present information and data as part of a whole class activity. Support for the non-specialist teacher is now good, but the department does not monitor teaching in order to identify and share good practice. Resources are varied and useful, although some books used in Years 7 to 9 are out-dated, but are still used. Pupils' work is regularly marked and teachers comment on pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 to indicate how to reach a higher standard. This approach is not used widely enough in Years 7 to 9 to support improvement in individual pupils' attainment. Target setting has been introduced and is, for example, being used to improve examination performance at the end of Year 11.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment and teaching have improved.
- Good learning is promoted in Years 10 and 11 by good teaching.
- The department is well led.
- Pupils are well motivated, enthusiastic about their work and have a very good relationship with the teacher.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures are not fully developed, so that results at the end of Year 9 are not sufficiently used to modify curriculum planning and teaching.
- The progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is not rigorously monitored.
- More systematic use of information and communication technology to enrich lessons.
- The sharing of good teaching through more systematic classroom observation.

- 149 Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry in Year 7. Boys perform as well as girls and better than boys nationally. The work seen broadly matches the teachers' assessments for 2000 and for 2001. In 2001, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels was above the national average and girls did better than boys at the higher levels. This represents an improvement in standards since the last inspection.

- 150 GCSE results in 2000 were in line with the national average at grades A\* to C. All pupils gained at least a G grade, which is above the national average, as they did in 2001. However, the proportion attaining the higher grades declined slightly. There has been a gradual, if fluctuating, improvement over the last three years. Standards are now higher than previously reported. However, boys do significantly worse than girls and they do not do as well as boys nationally, especially at the very highest grades. Overall, this represents satisfactory achievement for all pupils compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9 in 1998. However, close monitoring of pupils' progress is not adequately developed and consequently, there are some boys who have the potential for attaining higher grades, but who do not because their progress has not been checked.

- 151 By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of the key events and chronology in history. They select and record evidence from written sources competently, with the teacher giving good support to lower attaining pupils and to those with special educational needs. The skills of extended writing, criticised in the last report, have improved. Pupils write well in various forms, often with strong empathy, as instanced by sensitive letters by Year 7 pupils as Saxons on their defeat at Hastings. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 wrote vivid postcards home reflecting on changes in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Such writing skills are less developed in lower attaining pupils because teachers do not always provide well-structured guidance for writing, such as starter sentences and resources which match their learning needs. Higher attaining pupils have good analytical skills, recognising different causes. Pupils are developing skills of enquiry, organisation and interpretation of events and sources, as when Year 8 pupils examined the conflicting views of Mary Tudor's reign. However, the evaluative skills of understanding bias and reliability are not so evident.
- 152 Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with the national expectation. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts and events in the subject. They are developing skills of selecting and recording evidence. This includes lower attaining pupils and those with individual needs. Most of the more able pupils evaluate sources well and write at length both fluently and analytically, often with well-supported evidence, as when Year 11 pupils examined the reasons for conflicts in Ireland. However, other higher attainers and many of the average attaining pupils find it difficult to evaluate different causes and reach a broad overview if teachers do not frequently reinforce and test these skills.
- 153 Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are best in Years 10 and 11. Generally, teachers have high expectations and set pupils more challenging tasks that actively involve them in enquiry work and problem solving. For instance, lower attaining pupils in Year 9 eagerly involved themselves in researching the route of the proposed Bishop's Castle Canal, using the department's own well-prepared evidence. There is now more emphasis on developing effective extended writing in Years 7 to 9 to match the pupils good oral skills. Homework is challenging, regularly set and generally thoroughly marked with clear advice for improvement. Teaching is now almost exclusively by subject specialists, who use their good knowledge to plan lessons carefully. Consequently, pupils make good progress in most lessons in acquiring secure knowledge and learning important new skills of enquiry, organisation and interpretation of evidence. Teachers manage time well, especially in setting deadlines for tasks, although they do not always provide time to review progress at the end.
- 154 Monitoring pupils' progress during the lessons is a strength. Teachers question effectively and move around in support. The enthusiasm of the teachers makes most lessons exciting and helps to make the subject one of the most popular at GCSE. Teachers generate enthusiasm for work and promote good attitudes through their very warm relationship with pupils and their good classroom management. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are aware of their predicted grades. There is not enough regular monitoring of their current performance and constant reminders of how to improve.
- 155 Learning is less effective and pupils' attention falters when there is a slow pace to the lessons or when instructions are not clear. Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils enough. Questioning and tasks are not always rigorous enough to make pupils think analytically and critically.

156 The subject is effectively led by an enthusiastic head of department who has a very clear educational direction for history, with priorities for raising achievement strongly reflecting those of the college. Pupils' interest and achievement are celebrated and encouraged in excellent displays in the classrooms and main hall. Teachers are beginning to use data to set individual targets in Years 10 and 11, but they do not rigorously monitor the progress of pupils. Also, they do not use test results at the end of Year 9 to decide how they might change the curriculum or how teaching might change. A much-improved programme of information and communication technology is now integrated into the schemes of work. However, limited access to computer rooms still restricts more systematic use of computers. The sharing of good practice through systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching through classroom observation is undeveloped.

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

Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory. There are significant strengths in the ICT taught programme in Years 7 to 9, improvements in facilities and developments in the use of computers in other subjects. However, not all pupils have sufficient access to the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

#### **Strengths**

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in the development of computer skills and are becoming confident in using these skills.
- Teaching of ICT lessons is good and enables all pupils to achieve well.
- Most pupils have a very positive attitude to their work and are keen to use computers.
- Accommodation is good and a reliable computer network has been developed with limited funding.
- The developing use of computers in other subjects in Years 7 to 9.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Opportunities for all pupils to use ICT in Years 10 and 11 in order to meet National Curriculum requirements.
- The use of computers in other subjects.
- The co-ordination of computer based work in other subjects.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9.

157 The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been well above those reported nationally, but current work indicates that standards are only just above the national average. Standards are good because teachers plan and teach well in Years 7, 8 and 9. GCSE results have been well below the national average for the percentage attaining A\*-C grades, but the percentage gaining A\*-G grades has been above the national average. There are few A\*/A grades. Pupils continue to achieve almost as well in ICT as in their other subjects and many, including those with special educational needs, do well when their prior attainment is taken into account.

158 Attainment in the lessons is satisfactory. Together with previous work, this indicates that attainment overall is now slightly above the national expectation in all years. By the age of 14, pupils develop knowledge and skills in the use of word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases, measurement and control and an understanding about the applications and effects of computers on society. Most pupils, including those with special needs, demonstrate confidence when using computers and they learn well. They can remember procedures to access computer

programmes, work at a good pace and use their knowledge well in set projects. Year 8 pupils apply their skills in word processing, desktop publishing and data processing in a small project and this experience is extended in the Year 9 project about managing a sub-aqua club. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well because they are following well-structured courses and receive good individual teaching in lessons. Knowledge and skill levels vary with ability, but all pupils are able to follow the structured approach to project work and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. More able pupils work through tasks at a quicker pace and achieve higher standards.

- 159 Current work in Year 10 and 11 indicates that standards are improving. Pupils build on their good achievement in previous years. They continue to extend their knowledge and skills in set projects and Year 11 coursework indicates that they are able to demonstrate some individuality through interpretations of the work. Pupils follow good strategies for identifying and analysing problems, they word process their notes well, and identify pieces of equipment and computer software that are most appropriate for their individual projects. Applications of spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing and research through the Internet are used effectively to enhance the content and presentation of work. Pupils of all ability, including those with special needs, make good progress because they have access to a structured course that is well taught. Higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills more effectively in individualised work and this enables them to achieve higher standards.
- 160 In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop their computer skills through specific ICT lessons. The use of computers is also developing well in other subjects. There is good use of computers in design and technology for computer-aided design and manufacture and for elements of computer control. There is also satisfactory development in all other subjects except for mathematics and music. However, planned developments in some subjects are being hindered by lack of access to computer facilities. This developing good practice in Years 7 to 9 is far less evident in Years 10 and 11. Although there are examples of good use of computers by individual pupils in some subjects, for example in the presentation of folder work for design and technology, the programme for Year 10 and 11 is not sufficiently developed or co-ordinated. Consequently, the requirement for all pupils to experience the National Curriculum programmes of study and for all subjects to include ICT as part of their work is not being sufficiently met.
- 161 The overall quality of teaching in observed lessons is good. It is never less than satisfactory and in most lessons is good. Teachers demonstrate good technical knowledge, which enables them to deliver good class presentations and provide technical support to pupils during lessons. Overall planning is good and a variety of teaching methods are used. Teaching could be improved by more detailed planning of individual lessons to provide more specific timed and targeted focuses for pupils' work. Good levels of support for individual pupils are built into all lessons and, together with the structured approach to project work, this provides a very good framework for pupils' learning. The support is particularly effective for pupils with lower ability and those with special educational needs. Management of pupils and expectation of behaviour are good and result in a positive working atmosphere in lessons. Marking and assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11 provide very good regular guidance, which enables pupils to improve their work. Homework is set, but in some cases could be more substantial in order to provide better support for class work.

- 162 Overall, learning is good. Pupils develop their computer skills, show good knowledge retention when remembering computer procedures and are developing confidence in using a number of computer programmes with increasing independence. They work at a good pace and show interest and good concentration throughout most lessons. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils respond very positively and most pupils engage enthusiastically in the tasks set and are keen to use computers. Many use the computer rooms outside of lessons and show respect for others and the facilities.
- 163 ICT within the school has improved since the last inspection. The short time available for some year groups is used well and is enabling pupils to make significant progress. Significant improvements have taken place to improve computer facilities, but the management of access to computer facilities is still affecting the use made of computers in other departments. The in-service training of staff is helping to increase teachers' confidence to use ICT to help pupils learn in other subjects.

### MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French across the main school is satisfactory and in the sixth form it is good. In German and Spanish, which pupils can start to learn in Year 10 in alternate years, it is good. Standards of attainment in all three languages are in line with national averages and with those reported at the last inspection. Girls perform significantly better than boys in national tests and examinations.

#### Strengths

- The use of the foreign language by teachers as the medium of teaching.
- Teachers use a good variety of activities within lessons that enable pupils to acquire and practice all four language skills.
- The commitment of all members of the department to continue improvement.
- The good relationships established between teachers and pupils encourage enjoyment of learning.
- The strong leadership of the team leader.

#### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning to focus more on the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils are expected to develop.
- Assessment of pupils' work and progress using National Curriculum levels.
- The use of specific language-learning criteria to assess pupils' work.
- Raising teacher expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve.

- 164 In 2001, in teacher assessed tests taken at age 14, 75 per cent of pupils achieved the nationally expected standard or better in French. The national average was achieved by 46 per cent of the pupils. Girls achieved significantly higher than boys.
- 165 All pupils entered for GCSE in French in 2001 achieved a graded result. In line with the national average, 46 per cent of those entered achieved an A\*-C grade. Once again, girls performed substantially better than boys. Overall, the performance of most girls is good, but some boys are underachieving.
- 166 The quality of teaching is sound, but varies in its effectiveness across Years 7 to 11. In Years 7 to 9, teachers use a variety of activities to encourage pupils to acquire knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Their lively use of the target language as the medium of teaching leads pupils to develop good understanding of classroom

language and familiar topics. Pupils with special educational needs are well-integrated into lessons and make steady progress.

- 167 In the early years of language learning pupils show great enthusiasm for speaking words and simple sentences in French. They enjoy creating and performing short dialogues and join in songs with gusto. Teachers maintain a reasonable balance between passive and active skills, making sure that pupils experience both listening and responding, reading simple texts and recording work in writing. However, pupils need more encouragement to become independent speakers and writers, building their skills and confidence through frequent practice and challenge. Good habits in terms of accuracy of grammar and pronunciation are not firmly established in these years. At present, lack of attention to detail hampers the progress of many.
- 168 In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow classroom instructions given in the foreign language with understanding. They understand French speakers on tape speaking at normal pace sufficiently well enough to be able to pick out familiar details and sometimes to catch the gist of a conversation. However, many pupils lack the strategies and the self-confidence to understand familiar language in unfamiliar contexts.
- 169 In preparation for the GCSE examination, much work in French necessarily involves revision of previous learning as well as the acquisition of new knowledge. However, the work is not always at a higher level of challenge with the result that pupils recall earlier work, but do not make sufficient further progress. Pupils' ability to speak the foreign language is generally weak in spite of encouragement by teachers. Many pupils lack confidence and do not have a strong enough foundation from earlier years to enable them to express their ideas and opinions in genuine communication. Similarly, written work is almost always limited in its range to basic topic work. Written work is sometimes marred by careless errors, although more able pupils can construct simple narratives within defined topics.
- 170 The work of pupils starting a second foreign language in Year 10 is generally of a higher standard and pupils make good progress within the two-year course. In a Year 10 German lesson, pupils, who had started the language eight weeks previously, showed very good comprehension of their teacher's fluent speech in German. They described daily home routines in complete sentences with some confidence, firstly with written support and then from memory. They showed real enjoyment of the lesson and were actively engaged throughout. High expectations led to high performance.
- 171 Overall, pupils need to develop their language skills in line with National Curriculum levels so that by the age of 14 or 16 they are becoming increasingly confident and independent communicators.
- 172 The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in terms of knowledge and basic skills. Pupils have access to computers as planned in the schemes of work. Limited access restricts what pupils can do to use ICT widely in their work beyond word processing and bar charts. The reliance on course textbooks limits the range and depth of language studied to familiar topics of school and home. While this is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, it does not offer older pupils opportunities to employ chosen language with creativity and imagination, nor to learn about the wider world of work and international affairs. During the inspection good use was made of games and activities to support teaching and learning.

- 173 Assessment of pupils' work is carried out half-termly by end of unit tests. The department is at an early stage of tracking pupils' progress in each language skill and using this information to shape curricular planning. The department is well placed to focus on how to support pupils' learning through more rigorous lesson planning. In particular, planning needs to focus on the development of skills and pupils' use of their knowledge. There is not enough sharing of marking criteria with pupils to help them to take more responsibility for improving their work.
- 174 The leadership and management of the newly appointed team leader are very good. He has a clear vision of how to develop a love of language learning and of raising attainment. The department is very committed and hardworking and as a group are well placed to build on current strengths. The changes in staffing since the last inspection make it difficult to compare standards between the department then and now. The department continues to make satisfactory progress.

## MUSIC

The overall provision for music is good with many significant improvements since the last inspection. However, there is still more work to be done on aspects of managing the department.

### Strengths

- Improved standards in GCSE results.
- The quality of teaching is good with very good features.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- The standards of instrumental provision are high.

### Areas for improvement

- Scheme of work so that they show progression and development of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning in music.
- Accommodation because it is currently unsatisfactory.

- 175 The number of pupils choosing to study music for GCSE examination has increased considerably in the last three years and pupils have either achieved or improved on their predicted grades. In 2000 there were four candidates who all achieved A\*-C grades. In 2001, 13 candidates took the examination and 76 per cent achieved A\*-C grades which is above the national average. More girls than boys achieved the highest grades.
- 176 The teacher's assessments for pupils at the age of 14 indicate that attainment is above national expectations with girls achieving higher than boys. However, standards seen in lessons indicate that these results are over-generous and the standards for both boys and girls are in line with national expectations. Pupils arrive from their primary schools bringing with them a range of musical skills. They show a good understanding and enjoyment of singing. The quality of their singing is good and boys and girls participate equally. After a very good Year 7 lesson, pupils were taught to sing a variety of songs from Australia, Israel and Africa, learning through them a range of composition techniques. Pupils were keen to lead different parts of the songs and were confident in their singing ability. By the end of Year 9, pupils combine musical skills and instrumental abilities within group composing activities. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons and given support when necessary by both staff and fellow pupils. They make good progress and participate well.

- 177 The quality of the music teaching throughout the college is good overall with examples of very good teaching. This is an improvement on what was seen at the previous inspection. As a result, good effective learning takes place. Pupils respond well because they are given many opportunities to create their own music and also to perform. This means that they are stimulated and fully engaged in their lessons. Teacher expectations are high and pupils are expected to perform to the best of their ability. Other pupils listen carefully to peers performances and value all contributions. Objectives are clearly stated and understood by the pupils. The teachers' energy and enthusiasm for music is clearly communicated to pupils during lessons. Lessons enable pupils who have instrumental lessons to play their instruments within group compositions. In one lesson, Year 9 pupils were rehearsing a Christmas song where they had written the lyrics, melody and added appropriate accompaniments. One group of boys were all contributing and showed good rehearsal techniques and a good style and structure to their work. The teacher supported and helped evaluate the work so that improvements could be rehearsed before the final performance. There is a lack of planned opportunities for developing literacy and numeracy within the department. Opportunities are taken with the use of key words and lyric writing, but this could be developed further.
- 178 Pupils respond enthusiastically to their music lessons. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 discuss their compositions in a mature way giving musical reasons for their work. One pupil talked about how she was inspired to compose a piece after being introduced to Japanese flute music. Her composition showed a good understanding of this style of music. Another pupil had developed an interest in samba music and had researched this area of music in order to compose an effective and exciting piece of music. There are good relationships during lessons and pupils are given the opportunity to rehearse their work during lunchtime and after school. The department involves many pupils in extra-curricular music making and 13 per cent of pupils have instrumental lessons. The ensembles and choir are well supported despite travel problems. This means that special arrangements often have to be made to enable pupils to attend, with parents supporting the activities. Standards are rising, the wind group plays a variety of music and pupils from local primary schools are able to attend. The choir sing a range of music paying attention to tonal clarity and harmonic movement. The standards of pupils' instrumental abilities are rising with some pupils being prepared for and achieving high grades. Instrumental teachers feel valued and contribute to the musical life of the school. Music has a higher profile and is valued within the local community. Opportunities are provided for pupils to perform locally.
- 179 The head of department was appointed after the previous inspection. A period of staffing instability preceded her appointment. Much has been achieved in a short period of time in order to raise standards and the profile of music within and beyond the college. The head of department has prioritised areas for development and this is reflected in the good GCSE grades achieved and the much larger numbers of pupils choosing to study music beyond the age of 14 years. However, there are areas that have yet to be developed. Detailed lesson planning is underdeveloped and only exists in outline. This means that activities are sometimes not matched closely enough to pupils' needs. A method needs to be developed so that there is a coherent system for monitoring and assessing pupil progress. At present it is not possible to track pupil progress in different musical skills.
- 180 The accommodation for music making is unsatisfactory with insufficient practise rooms, especially when there are visiting instrumental teachers. Lack of soundproofing means that pupils have to rehearse and work in a noisy atmosphere.



It is to be commended that despite this their concentration is good and so are the results. Resources are adequate and have been improved recently. The department does not have sufficient information and communication technology equipment to support music learning. Better equipment would enable pupils to store, retrieve and explore musical sounds.

- 181 Much has already been achieved and developed during the last two years. Pupils are involved in a variety of musicmaking. There is considerable potential for further improvement, a determination to succeed and further raise the profile of music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good and the standards pupils reach are at least as good as those in other schools and are sometimes better.

### Strengths

- GCSE results and the good teaching of the GCSE course.
- Teachers know their subject and their pupils well.
- The activities provided outside of lessons are very good.
- Assessment procedures are informative and manageable.

### Areas for improvement

- Lesson plans that specify what pupils will learn and help teachers choose the right activities.
- The department development plan so that it is directed at raising standards.
- Opportunities for sixth formers to participate in a timetabled programme of activity.

- 182 Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that boys reach standards that are in line with what is expected nationally and girls reach standards that are above this. GCSE results have been above the national average and over the last three years all pupils have gained pass grades. Results in 2001 were well below those in 2000 and the department is not exactly clear why this is the case. Higher attaining pupils have represented the county in their chosen sports and boys football and basketball teams do well in local competitions.

- 183 In lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, standards are in line with what is expected or better. The department teaches single sex groups in these years and believes that this is improving pupils' attitudes to the subject. Boys certainly have very positive attitudes and these have led to the good standards in football in Year 9 and in rugby and swimming in Years 7 and 8 respectively. In rugby the boys made good progress because the lesson was very focused on one key aspect of the game and all activities were designed to improve their skills in that aspect. By the end of the lesson they were timing a pass well in order to draw their opponent and create space for their partner to receive the ball and run on.

- 184 The attitudes of girls are variable and seem to depend on individual groups. Where there is a combination of good teaching and positive attitudes girls make good progress and reach a good standard. This was particularly evident in a basket ball lesson where they developed their skills in the jump shot both in practices and in a game. Because routines had been established and the lesson was well planned with a range of activities these girls took responsibility for warming up without having to be told and were enthusiastic about their work. In other lessons where the groups were harder to motivate, the learning was not as good because the choice of

activities did not give them a level of success that could lead to enjoyment and a bit more enthusiasm. In hockey, a few girls were able to use a push pass with sufficient accuracy to enable a quite complex practice to go well.

- 185 It was not possible to observe Year 11 practical work during the inspection and so most observations focused on Year 10. The GCSE theory and practical lessons were taught well and the standard of work seen indicates that results for the current Year 11 should be better than they were in 2001. Year 10 pupils' work was also of a good standard. Many were able to design an appropriate fitness programme directly related to their chosen sport and were able to explain why they had included certain activities in the programme. Pupils have a very positive attitude and enjoy very good relationships with each other and their teachers. Two lessons were observed of the "Sport in the Community Course" which is part of the alternative curriculum in Year 10. This course has captured the imagination of these pupils because the teacher has developed a course that is interesting and relevant and can also be accredited rather than designing a course around an accreditation framework. She also has high expectations that they will be able to do quite challenging projects. The Year 7 swimming gala was being organised entirely by this group.
- 186 Teaching is satisfactory overall and in some lessons it is good or very good. Every lesson begins with an appropriate warm up. In the good lessons, pupils are given some responsibility for deciding at least the order in which they will stretch the muscles that closely relate to the activity. This helps them to understand how best to prepare for specific activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge that helps them to assess what is happening in the lesson and to target individual pupils who need help. It also means that they can respond when pupils ask questions of their own. They also work hard to involve pupils in observing their partners and coaching them, an area identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Pupils don't find this easy and need more help in learning to fulfil that role. There is some good use of questioning, but sometimes teacher explanations are not crisp enough and go on for too long. Planning of the overall programme for physical education is good and schemes of work are helpful in showing how pupils will progress to more advanced work as they move through the school. However, lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed. Where there are learning objectives these are not always shared with pupils and they are rarely used to identify the learning that has or has not taken place. Because the identification of learning objectives is not a matter of course sometimes activities chosen in the lesson are not quite the right ones and sometimes go on for too long, curtailing the final activity. Although most lessons involve a summary of what has been covered, they rarely involve pupils actively in identifying or recalling learning.
- 187 The department is well managed and organised. It has a very good view of how it can use and support the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, but the lack of computers and other technology makes their work in this area difficult to achieve. There is a commitment to develop pupils' understanding of language, but in some situations opportunities to extend technical language are missed. Assessment procedures are good. They relate to the National Curriculum levels and are manageable from a teacher's perspective, providing good information on which to base reports to parents. The department development plan reflects school priorities, but is not sufficiently focused on improving standards. The team works closely together and is very supportive of each other, but there is little time for them to observe each other teaching. Although they teach boys and girls separately in Key Stage 3, teachers plan together to ensure they make best use of accommodation and resources. The extra-curricular provision is good, particularly for a small department. Teachers work very hard and give freely of their time in

order to maintain fixtures and inter-form competitions. The department has good links with parents who willingly provide transport for their children when they are involved in these activities. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Not enough is done to contribute to pupils' cultural development, particularly in relation to preparing pupils to live in a multi-cultural society, through display materials and resources in the library.

- 188 The department has maintained the good work identified at the previous inspection, but there are two outstanding whole school issues to be tackled. The time available in Years 10 and 11 is still barely sufficient and, although sixth form students get the opportunity to help younger pupils in lessons, there continues to be no opportunities for sixth formers to participate in leisure activities as part of their curriculum.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is very good as a result of well-planned learning activities that enhance pupils' understanding and awareness of religion.

### Strengths

- Very good quality specialist teaching.
- Well-planned provision for pupils to learn both about and from religious beliefs.
- The inclusion of all abilities in the full range of learning activities.
- The sensitive use of religious artefacts to aid pupils' understanding of different faiths.

### Areas for improvement

- Involvement of representatives from different faiths in the learning process.
- Raising the attainment of the most able pupils and the results achieved by boys at the end of Key Stage 3.
- An increase in the number of visits to place of religious significance.
- The monitoring of non-specialist teaching in order to develop and share good practice.

- 189 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 is just below the expected standards for the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus. In 2001, the attainment of most pupils has improved and is now in line with expected standards for schools in the area, but with girls achieving more of the higher levels. The progress of pupils with learning needs is good as a result of the learning support they receive.

- 190 The 2000 GCSE results were well above the national average. These standards have been maintained in 2001. Pupils with special educational needs attain standards that are good in relation to their known level of ability.

- 191 Pupils have a positive attitude towards the subject and this is reflected in the good standards that many achieve in lessons and in the good quality of the work seen in pupils' books and in classroom displays of their work. Boys and girls of all abilities enjoy the subject and this leads to a high level of involvement in the well-planned teacher-led discussions that form an important element of the subject's learning activities. Through discussion, pupils in Year 9 develop a good insight into the feelings a young Jewish boy or girl might have on reaching an important religious milestone in their life. Good use is made of group and paired work to increase knowledge and understanding of a topic the whole class has studied. Pupils in Year 8 greatly increase their knowledge of the Hindu and Sikh religions through individual group investigations and then use the information to support a well-organised presentation to the whole class. As a result of these strategies many pupils are able

to write informed descriptions and explanations and this is supporting the very good standards reached. Some use is made of visits to local places of religious significance, but this has yet to become a sufficiently high profile part of pupils' learning activities. Little use is made of local religious leaders within lesson activities with the result that few pupils have encountered people from most of the faiths they are studying.

- 192 Lessons all show evidence of careful preparation and the learning activities match the requirements of the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus. In the majority of lessons, a range of activities interests pupils and keeps most of them fully involved in their learning. The well thought-out level of support that teachers give to all pupils with special educational needs ensures that they are fully included in all lessons and make good progress over time. At the end of one lesson, a Year 9 boy provided accurate information about a religious ceremony that indicated clear understanding as a result of the support he had received.
- 193 Pupils develop a good knowledge of the customs and practices of different faiths and are shown from Year 7 how to interpret and understand the significance of individual events. By the end of Year 9, they have compared several religions and are starting to develop an understanding of the different ways that religion can influence people's lives. Year 10 and 11 pupils following the GCSE examination course use ideas and knowledge acquired in previous work to develop their understanding of religious concepts more fully, for example about celebration and sacrifice. Very good use is made of religious artefacts and this recently introduced approach is effective in promoting pupils' understanding of how such items aid and support worship as well as developing feeling about individual religious activities. One teacher's sensitive use of music greatly aided pupils' understanding of the way in which religion uses many different ways to involve people in the process of worship.
- 194 Very good teaching by the specialist teacher, together with consistently good teaching by non-specialist teachers is a strength of the subject. Teachers are developing innovative approaches to extend pupils' understanding with drama used to good effect in a Year 7 lesson to support their understanding of the seven days of the Creation. Pupils are encouraged to pronounce key religious words correctly and to use them accurately in written work. Together with the use of descriptive and creative writing, this approach effectively supports the literacy development of all pupils. Good planning exists for the use of tasks matched to the ability of individual pupils, but there is not sufficient done to support the raising of boys' attainment by the end of Year 9 and the attainment of the most able pupils in all years.
- 195 The recently appointed subject leader shows good management and leadership and has rapidly developed a new syllabus and updated resources to support learning. Support for non-specialist teachers is very good and enables all lessons to be planned and delivered effectively, but there is not enough monitoring of teaching to ensure that good practice is shared. Pupils' work is regularly marked with comments that indicate how pupils can improve. The locally agreed assessment levels are not yet used to record attainment accurately during Years 7 to 9. Teachers apply examination grades skilfully when they mark the work of pupils in Years 10 and 11, both to acknowledge accurate written work and to set targets for improvement. Some use is made of information and communication technology as a whole class activity to enable pupils to gather information and to experience ceremonies, such as baptism, using information from Internet sites.

## BUSINESS

Overall, the provision for GNVQ intermediate business in Years 10 and 11 is good.

### Strengths

- Pupils are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are good as a result of well-planned lessons and good support for pupils of all abilities.
- Teachers use information and communication technology effectively to enhance learning.
- Pupils have good attitudes to work, which promote good learning.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring the consistency of good teaching practice through systematic classroom observation.
- The further use of visits and the local business community to enhance the curriculum and pupils' learning.

196 This GNVQ Part One course was introduced in September 2000 and the current Year 11 is the first cohort to be examined. There is therefore no earlier examination data. In work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with the national average. Although a decision has not yet been made on the entry level for Year 11 pupils, half of them are on target for gaining at least merit awards at Intermediate Level, with the rest passing.

197 Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the key business terms and concepts such as marketing mix and functional areas. They have competent skills of selecting and recording information accurately from detailed sources, for example in their depth study of the problems of location, marketing and organisation in Year 11. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs also made relevant notes and could draw conclusions. However, their skills of extended and analytical writing are not so well developed as those of higher attainers. Nearly all pupils have at least satisfactory skills of using number and interpreting graphs in drawing conclusions from their survey on eating habits. Skills of using information and communication technology are well developed by Year 11, especially in more able pupils, who illustrated their findings well with well-drawn bar graphs and pie charts. These skills are less well developed amongst Year 10 pupils.

198 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils make good progress in most lessons in acquiring secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. They also learn important skills of enquiry, organisation and, for the higher attaining pupils, analysis and interpretation of evidence. This is because the head of department uses very good subject knowledge to plan assignments carefully that provide challenges for the pupils. Pupils meet the performance criteria both in terms of developing business knowledge and the key skills of communications, application of number and ICT. Teachers have a very good relationship with the class and manage them very effectively. They are strongly aware of the individual needs of pupils and support them well in providing advice on improvement. Generally time is used well and deadlines are set for tasks. Consequently, pupils work enthusiastically at a steady pace and their output is generally good with nearly all meeting completion deadlines for assignments. This is because they are strongly motivated and teachers generally have high expectations. However, when the pace of the lesson drops, learning is not so good and the concentration of some pupils

falters. Homework assignments are regularly set and marked with generally helpful comments on how to improve, although these are not always consistently rigorous.

- 199 The subject is well managed by a very committed head of department who gives clear educational direction. The curriculum is well planned and the main business studies room is well resourced with computers, which are used regularly and successfully for research and recording purposes. Assessment procedures are good, with information of pupils' prior attainment being well used to set targets and track progress. Pupils are fully aware of their progress and know how to improve. Although one of the teachers is a non-specialist, there is much support from the head of department so that standards are not adversely affected. This could be further enhanced by more systematic classroom observation to ensure a consistency of the very best practice. Although pupils use Bishop's Castle for initial fieldwork in Year 10, visits are infrequent and the local business community is not fully used to enhance the curriculum and pupils' learning.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	63	0	17	3.0	1.6

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	63	89	13	45	3.8	6.0
Chemistry	5	80	89	20	42	5.2	5.9
Biology	20	90	88	15	34	4.6	5.2
Physics	7	57	88	14	41	3.1	5.7
Other sciences	8	75	89	0	31	3.0	5.2
Design and technology	3	100	92	0	29	4.7	5.3
Business studies	13	85	91	0	30	3.7	5.3
Business	11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.6	10.8
Geography	9	78	92	56	37	5.8	5.7
History	3	100	89	67	34	8.0	5.4
Religious studies	3	100	91	33	35	6.0	5.6
Other social studies	3	100	88	33	35	6.0	5.3
Sociology	5	100	88	0	37	4.0	5.5
English literature	4	100	96	25	36	6.0	5.9
French	7	86	91	14	39	4.0	5.7

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

The focus was the A-level course in Year 12 as no students had proceeded from their AS course in 2001 to the A2 course this year. Overall, the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

##### Strengths

- Results in A level have been consistently in line with the national average for many years.
- Students' attendance is very good and they are confident in their ability.
- Students have a good knowledge of their own learning.
- The department is well led and managed.

##### Areas for development

- Results in AS in 2001 were well below the national average.
- Students rely too heavily on using notes and examples.
- Current arrangements for teaching rely on the same teacher leading in all lessons.
- Whilst teaching is satisfactory, lessons lack a variety of teaching styles, including the use of information and communication technology.
- The school does not allocate enough time to teach the course.
- Arrangements for Key Skills Application of Number are unsatisfactory.

200 The GCE A-level examination results were below the national average in 2000, but improved in 2001. In 2001, Year 13 students did particularly well at the highest level with two of the five students gaining grade A. However, only two of the nine students studying the AS level course in 2001 passed, and the highest grade was D. There is currently no course in Year 13 and two students have rejoined Year 12 to repeat the course. In recent years there has been no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or in the numbers of boys and girls following the course. The current Year 12 students are all boys.

201 Standards of work of Year 12 students are at the national average overall. The students are competent with new areas of learning such as calculus. They have a good appreciation of the inverse relation between differentiation and integration and understand how these processes are used. They accurately use factor and formula methods to solve quadratic equations. However, students often struggle to extend their understanding of concepts they have met previously in GCSE work because they lack practice in exploring methods and ideas for themselves.

202 In a statistics lesson on grouped data, the students used a calculation method to determine the upper and lower quartiles for the heights of sunflowers so as to give information about the spread of the data. The students had already plotted an accurate cumulative frequency graph of the heights and obtained estimates of these quartile values using this method. The calculation method clearly did not confirm the results of the graph method. An opportunity was missed to discuss the discrepancies fully, rather than attributing the cause to possible inaccuracies in graph plotting. This lack of questioning and acceptance of rote methods features too often in lessons. It was important in this case because other real life occasions where flaws can occur with this calculation method should have been explored.



- 203 Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are structured to ensure progression and the teacher involves all students in question and answer discussion. Homework is given regularly and marked promptly. Often, however, the answers to the questions are too obvious and the pace of the lesson drops. Rarely are students asked to discuss ideas amongst themselves at the initial stages of learning. Whilst they are keen to work hard and do well, students are often not challenged enough to attempt questions or parts of questions until the teacher has spent too much time on examples at the board.
- 204 Relationships amongst the students and between the teacher and the students are very good. However, this occasionally results in students being too relaxed. Students sometimes forget basic equipment and conversations too often drift away from mathematics. Students attend conscientiously, have well-placed confidence in their own ability and have a good grasp of the levels at which they are working. They are willing to do whatever the teacher requires of them, but the teacher does not take advantage of this willingness to insist that they work independently. On the occasions where another teacher supports in lessons, students are more focused on learning because there is a new teacher to impress.
- 205 Leadership and management have been good in maintaining results in GCE A level over many years, as well as maintaining morale in times of recent staffing problems. The department showed ingenuity last year in producing in-house materials to alleviate the problem of late publication of textbooks. However, whilst they have solved the problem of basic resources and of accepting students unsuited to the course other problems remain. Students do not experience a wide range of teaching and learning styles because only one teacher teaches the course. They do not have opportunities to use a range of resources, including information and communication technology. There is not enough time allocated for teaching the course.
- 206 The head of department is aware of the improvements needed. The department has the capacity to address these needs with the support of the headteacher so that it not only maintains, but also improves the results in A-level GCE. Accommodation is satisfactory for sixth form teaching and teachers are appropriately qualified to teach this course.

## **Sciences**

- 207 The focus was on chemistry, but biology, physics and environmental science were sampled.
- 208 In biology, results were good in 2001 and better than in physics or chemistry. Most students achieve results slightly above what could be expected from their previous GCSE grades. The teaching was very good in the one biology lesson observed. Observations in class and scrutiny of work show that learning is secure. Biology is the most popular choice at A-level for sixth form students. Results in physics are variable due to the small numbers of candidates. Results in 2001 were below national expectations. One lesson was observed and the teaching and learning were good. Scrutiny of coursework and tests show that these students are making satisfactory progress towards their predicted grades. Students find the new physics A-level course to be more relevant to their needs. Results in environmental science were below the national average in 2000 but improved in 2001. Standards seen in the lesson were good. Good quality teaching and well-planned learning activities ensure that all students make good progress. Good use is made of information from

the Internet. Students discuss issues confidently and well-informed contributions from individuals enables them to all reach good levels of understanding.

## Chemistry

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Students share ideas freely and work well together.
- Relationships between students and their teachers are good and students are confident to try out their thoughts and ideas without fear of failure.
- Investigative work is of a good standard.

### Areas for improvement

- Marking is not sufficiently diagnostic and does not give enough guidance for further study.
- Work is not challenging enough in some lessons.
- The time allocation is inadequate for an A-level practical subject.
- One-hour lessons are too short for investigations and causes practical work to be rushed or discontinuous.

209 The small numbers of candidates makes it unreliable to make judgements about trends in results, although results in 2000 were close to the national average. Most students achieve grades close to what could be expected, but those likely to underachieve are students who enter the sixth form with modest GCSE grades. Such students find it more difficult to learn as some of the notes presented to them are basic and do not have the depth or insight to make learning easier. Year 13 students can carry out calculations on acid-alkali equilibria and work out the pH and pOH of solutions. Lessons are structured and planned, but not all are equally effective in placing demands on the students. Students work very well and with confidence, but written work is inclined to be brief.

210 Year 12 students, though only a short distance into the course, are clearly making good progress from GCSE levels. They already have a good understanding of the electronic structure of atoms. Scrutiny of work shows that these students have become accustomed to a different mode of working in the sixth form and are producing thoughtful answers to the problems posed.

211 Teaching is satisfactory overall. Of the three lessons seen one was good and the others satisfactory. Lessons are planned and students are given clear learning objectives. However, in one lesson the students individually carried out an undemanding experiment and consequently, did not make as much progress as they should have done. Students would have profited more from carrying out different experiments and then sharing ideas and results, so that they could make progress in understanding key processes and concepts. In the good lesson, much more was demanded of the students and there was no idle time. The pace was kept up by timing activities and students had to continually present and refine their ideas as the teacher used his good subject knowledge to probe and check understanding.

212 Scrutiny of work shows that students carry out substantial amounts of independent learning and research. More able students enhance their classroom notes and learn from them, but less able candidates find this difficult and do not make the same

progress. Most students have a good range of notes, which they have clearly written in their own words, but there is a sizeable amount of copied or dictated material. Day-to-day marking is satisfactory, but there is a need to be more diagnostic and give clearer guidance to students. There is not much evidence in the use of computers for presentation of work or learning in chemistry, although the use of data-loggers and sensors are planned in the schemes of work.

- 213 Students form good working relationships with each other and their teachers. This builds their confidence so that they are willing to answer and test out their ideas without fear of ridicule or failure. They are willing workers and respond positively to all guidance given by teachers. They are able to research new material and extract the most relevant pieces. The course is carefully planned and timed; though schemes of work need to have more of a focus on learning methods. There is a need for more monitoring and evaluation of teaching. The current system of having a separate teacher for each year group coming through does not allow for the sharing of good practice or the combining of teachers' strengths. The subject is satisfactorily managed.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

- 214 No subjects were inspected in depth, but work was sampled from design and technology. Results for post-16 courses have been low. Attainment in the lessons seen was good. Students are developing a good range of knowledge about materials and their use and are using this effectively in design related assignments that are often well researched. They are developing their knowledge of materials to analyse existing products and to develop their own individual and sometimes creative solutions. Teaching of the sixth form is shared between members of the team that makes good use of the expertise available. Students respond well to the teaching methods used and although the pace of lessons is sometimes limited they show good levels of concentration and are keen to engage in the tasks set. In the absence of time being available for teaching of the full course both teachers and students give freely of their time in order to cover the syllabus.

## **BUSINESS**

Two courses were inspected in this area in depth: A-level business and GNVQ business at intermediate level. Overall, the quality of provision in business is good.

### **Strengths**

- Students in Year 12 are making good progress in both courses.
- Good learning is promoted by good, well organised and committed teachers who set high expectations.
- Computers are used well to extend the communications and research skills of students.
- Students are very well motivated and respond enthusiastically to the opportunities for studying independently.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Best teaching practice is not shared because there is no systematic observation of lessons.
- There is not enough contact with local businesses to enhance the curriculum and provide more stimulus and resources for the students.

- 215 The college has provided GCE A Level and GNVQ Intermediate courses for at least four years. As a result of a shortage of specialist staff, a GNVQ Advanced course

has not been provided since it was last examined in 2000 when standards were in line with the national average. The 12 entrants gained three distinctions, four merits and three passes. Standards at Intermediate Level were also in line in 2000 with over three-quarters of students gaining awards. Standards at A-Level were well below the national average at the higher grades and below at grades A to E. There was some underachievement, partly due to the teacher, the only specialist, teaching a large combined group of A-Level and GNVQ Advanced Level students together. However, students did not do significantly worse in business studies than in their other A-Level subjects. Results in 2001 have improved with all students passing at A to E, and boys doing significantly better in attaining higher grades. Results in GNVQ Intermediate were also in line in 2001, as they have been consistently for the last three years. All students passed at AS level in 2001 and all those taking the AS course have continued with the A-Level.

- 216 Standards in work seen are in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for the A-Level students in Year 13 compared with their prior attainment at GCSE. Students in Year 12 on the AS and GNVQ courses are making good progress, as many of them had below average attainment in GCSE. Year 12 students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the key business terms and concepts, for instance in understanding factors influencing location in the GNVQ course. Nearly all students have at least competent literacy skills: they are able to select and record relevant information and have good skills of listening, reading and speaking. Most of the Year 12 AS students spoke clearly and confidently in making their impressive presentations on market research. They also demonstrated the good skills in using the PowerPoint programme on the computer that nearly all students display, including those with special educational needs. They confidently use spreadsheets, bar charts and pie graphs, as well as word processing, to support their research. Year 13 students, though without experience of using PowerPoint, have fully developed skills of using the Internet, as when they enquired into the nature of trade unions on the TUC website.
- 217 Higher attaining students in Year 13 write at length with precise relevance, fluency and well-supported, analytical arguments. Skills of extended writing and analysis are less well developed in middle and lower attainers, especially in Year 12 on the AS course. There are weaknesses in structuring paragraphs and in their written expression unless they are regularly checked by teachers. There is often a tendency to retell the data provided rather than critically evaluate it.
- 218 Teaching is good or better in nearly three-quarters of the lessons. It is never unsatisfactory. Teaching of the A Level course is characterised by very good subject knowledge, which is well used to plan a variety of challenging tasks. There is a lively pace to lessons, which stimulates strong interest and response from the students and very thorough marking to track their progress and guide improvement. Although some teaching of the GNVQ course is by non-specialists, they are well prepared and their enthusiasm and concern for the students promotes strong enthusiasm in return. For example, a teacher carefully ensured that lower attaining students understood what to do in preparing for their detailed study of a local business park. This is typical of the very good relationship that teachers have with the students, often based on humour and much praise for good work. Students' progress is constantly monitored in class by checking their understanding against clearly set aims for the lesson through moving around the room and questioning effectively. For example, Year 12 AS students had their awareness of skills of presentation reinforced by the teacher through searching follow-up questions when their talks were finished.

- 219 This good quality teaching produces good learning with positive and productive gains in students' knowledge and skills in nearly three-quarters of the lessons. It is also promoted by the good attitudes of the students to work. They co-operate very well with each other and the teacher, as seen when the GNVQ students enthusiastically and tolerantly listened carefully to each others' views in thinking up ideas for a business enterprise. They also display the maturity and strong motivation to take on the responsibility of working by themselves as the tasks are stimulating and well explained. Consequently, nearly all students meet deadlines and are enthusiastic about the subject. Four of the five Year 13 A-level students are considering studying the subject in higher education and all expressed strong appreciation of the support and guidance provided.
- 220 A clear educational direction is provided for the subject by the enthusiastic head of department. Learning resources, especially the computers in the business studies base room, are well managed and all staff are very well supported. However, the use of regular and mutual classroom observation as a way of monitoring teaching and sharing good practice, has not been developed. There are good assessment procedures with information of pupils' prior attainment being well used to set targets and track progress. Pupils are fully aware of their progress and know how to improve. Assessment and examination results are well analysed by prior attainment, gender and background and inform teaching. For instance, the head of department, after recent assessments, is fully aware of the need to develop the skills of AS students in doing extended writing and analysis. Students benefit from visits to other parts of the country, but there is inadequate contact with local businesses to enhance the curriculum and provide more stimulus and resources for the students.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

No courses are offered in this curriculum area.

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

No courses are offered in this curriculum area.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No courses are offered in this curriculum area.

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

- 221 No courses were inspected in depth, but A-level art and design was sampled. One lesson was seen of a small combined Year 12 and 13 group. Teaching and learning was very good characterised by high expectations and very good support for individual students. Work showed good evidence of research in annotated sketchbooks and there was good use of computers for facial distortion. Students were well-motivated and enjoyed very good relationships with each other and their teacher.

## **HUMANITIES**

- 222 The focus was on geography, but history, religious education and psychology were sampled. In all four subjects the numbers of students involved are small and therefore it is not wholly valid to make national comparisons. Two lessons of A-Level history were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. In 2000, the

proportion of students gaining the highest grades and the proportion of students obtaining grades A-E were both well above national averages, with all three students passing the examination. Results for 2001 at grades A to B were even better. Attainment in work seen is also above the national average and students achieve well compared with expectations based on GCSE results. This is due to the high expectations that the very good teaching sets, which stimulate critical analysis, wide research and effective independent enquiry.

- 223 The small number of A-level students in religious studies achieved results in 2000 that were similar to the national average, but there were no highest grades. In 2001, two students achieved the highest grade with the subject maintaining standards of attainment. All students build on their knowledge gained in earlier work in the subject to develop an in-depth understanding of individual faiths, for example, through a detailed study of Islam as well as the environment in which it developed. Students show a high level of understanding of religious concepts and very good supportive teaching encourages them to consider the occurrence and impact of religious experience, and to reflect on their own attitudes towards religion and life.
- 224 Results in psychology are above the national average. Currently five students are following the AS course and two the A2 course. Students are making good progress because teaching is very good with well-prepared resources and materials to meet their needs.

## Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is very good because teachers actively involve all students in a wide range of learning activities.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching over time.
- A well planned provision for independent learning.
- High quality investigation and fieldwork activities.
- Very good interaction between teachers and students.

### Areas for improvement

- Some resources are out-dated.
- Not enough use is made of visual materials to support all students understanding in whole group discussions.
- There are few opportunities to share good practice through lesson observation.

- 225 Advanced level results in 2000 were satisfactory with several students achieving the highest grades. However, overall standards were below those achieved nationally because two students did not achieve a pass grade. Results for 2001 show an improvement with all students in the small group achieving well above the pass grade. Four students achieved the highest grade and as a result standards are above those nationally. These results indicate that the subject is successfully building on the standards that students achieved at the end of Year 11.
- 226 In lessons, discussions and in their written work many students achieve very good standards. They enjoy the subject as a result of the way in which teachers encourage and support their learning. Students show good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied in both human and physical geography. They are able to identify the impact of the natural environment on human activity through

topics such as 'geographical processes and their management'. This approach was high profile in a lesson about coastal change with students considering strategies to deal with coastal erosion problems. Students are active participants in their learning and the provision of well-planned fieldwork activities enables them to bring first-hand evidence into the discussion and written tasks. Most students participate well in the discussions and show an ability to use key geographical terms accurately.

- 227 The quality of teaching over time is very good as evidenced by the range of learning activities in lessons, the variety of quality work in students' folders and the positive way in which all students view the teaching they have received over the last year. Lessons have a clear structure and the aims of the lesson and the activities to be undertaken are made clearly known. Both teachers show very good subject knowledge and convey this effectively through the way they explain and discuss issues and developments with students. This was a significant feature of a Year 12 lesson with students guided through the process of linking the pattern of river drainage to different landscapes. This resulted in all students being able to match the data accurately to each sample area. Students are encouraged to use the department's computers and they show competence in the collection and analysis of information and data. Discussion is used effectively with students expected to include ideas and information from their own research. This approach is supporting independent learning and is making a positive contribution to the good standards students achieve by the end of Year 13. Visual materials are not always used to support understanding in discussions with the result that students are over-dependant on oral descriptions.
- 228 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. This has resulted in the development of learning activities that match the requirements of the advanced courses undertaken by Year 12 and 13 students. The topics and themes are well sequenced in the schemes of work and this ensures that students build upon earlier work and undertake a suitable number of physical and human studies. Both geography teachers work effectively as a team and the sharing of the teaching ensures that students experience high-quality specialist teaching related to the physical and human themes. However, opportunities for teachers to observe one another's teaching closely are limited and this affects the sharing of good practice. Textbook resources are used appropriately with a good range available to support learning, but there is a need to update some resources where the case study evidence is no longer valid. Student's progress is monitored and good quality marking clearly identifies what has been done correctly and areas for improvement. Together with target setting, based on data collected by teachers, this careful monitoring supports the good standards students achieve at the end of Year 13.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

- 229 The focus was on English, but French was also sampled. Seven students took A-level French in 2000 and their results were below the national average. In 2001, four pupils took the examination, these results were better than those in 2000. There are currently three pupils taking A-level French, one in Year 12 and two in Year 13. These pupils are strongly motivated and work well. They are making good progress and their standards are in line with national expectations because teaching is very good.

## English Literature

The provision for this subject is good.

### Strengths

- Students attain good standards in A-level examinations.
- Consistently good teaching is varied and challenging.
- Lessons have lively and informed discussions by interested students.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' written work is not always fluent.
- Not enough use is made of information on students' previous attainment to judge their progress over time.

- 230 The number of students opting for English literature is low. Results in examinations have been consistently good and in 2001 all the students achieved grade A at GCE advanced level. Students achieve well in their sixth form English studies.
- 231 Standards seen in lessons and in students' work vary from average to above. Students in Year 12 are lively and participate fully in discussions. The teacher leads the group well and gives them a framework for looking at the set novel. Her questions are subtly probing and she is skilled at turning their answers into a debate. "You say that conflict is necessary in a novel - why? Where does it manifest itself in this novel?" Students are encouraged to answer in a literate style and to avoid colloquialisms. They find this difficult in class discussions and in their writing. The teacher tries to help by asking them all to suggest improvements to phraseology and this results in an exploration of the shades of meaning that occur when different vocabulary is used.
- 232 In Year 13, the lesson plans have a clear structure to enable the students to develop their understanding of literature. They are able to draw on their previous reading of *Jane Eyre* to discuss the importance of context when studying writers. This led to a better grasp of Jean Rhys and her writing. The teacher provided good follow up material to allow students to find out for themselves some of the characteristics of her style and the context within which she wrote. The lessons had pace and variety with students being given time to prepare their ideas before discussion. This meant that they were more confident and were able to present well-substantiated opinions on the topic of feminism through the ages.
- 233 Students use a range of sources to research their ideas and have good notes to help them work independently. Teachers' marking helps students to an improved essay style. Students pursue themes well and can use apt quotations to support their ideas. This was seen in their work on *Educating Rita* where they showed a good knowledge of the development of the main character and her feelings of gradual isolation. Students' understanding of the poetry of John Donne showed less security, but they were helped by the teacher's comments and suggestions.
- 234 The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. There is good use of resources to provide students with a broader view of themes and topics. An example of this is the use of selected short recordings on stalking, as a stimulus to a class discussion on obsession in their set novel. The questions posed by teachers are very well judged and add academic rigour to discussions when students seem to be missing the point. The small size of the classes does impose limits on the breadth of discussion. No plans were seen to combine the two year groups



occasionally to provide opportunities for students to share ideas on a wider front. However, the time-table allows such an arrangement.

- 235 The subject is competently led and teachers work well together to make good use of their existing resources. Although marking is detailed and thorough, there is insufficient use of information on students' previous attainment to judge progress accurately.