

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **NEWALL GREEN HIGH SCHOOL**

Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105571

Headteacher: Barry Morrison

Reporting inspector: Denis Pittman  
OIN: 16976

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2002

Inspection number: 190129  
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:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr J Grant
Date of previous inspection:	4 <sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16976	Mr D Pittman	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
12682	Mr J Griffin	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
22723	Mr B Hartman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2200	Mr J Stirrup	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Drama</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
1407	Mr P Scott	Team inspector	Science	
31963	Mr M Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
11672	Mr P Harle	Team inspector	Art and design	
14573	Mr H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11751	Mr D Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
1340	Mr D Wigley	Team inspector	Music, dance	
19295	Mr P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	
1517	Mr D Griffith	Team Inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
18032	Ms I Randall	Team Inspector	History	
31779	Mr V Harrison	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
19066	Ms J Brooke	Team Inspector	Religious education Humanities	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Newall Green is an average size comprehensive school with 898 students on roll (422 girls, 476 boys). The school serves one of the most socially and economically deprived areas in the country. Its baseline statistics reflect this level of deprivation with a free school indicator of over 50 per cent, which is well above the national average. The students' standards of attainment when they enter the school are well below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs (25 per cent) is above the national average. Within this number there are a relatively high number of students with full statements of special educational need (4.6 per cent); this is also above average. There are few students from minority ethnic groups and the number of students speaking English as an additional language is very low. In order to meet these challenges and address the specific needs of its students the school has embarked on a number of initiatives. The school gained college status for the Performing Arts in April 2000. It has led much of the work of the Wythenshawe Education Action Zone with a focus on raising standards. The school has taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the Excellence in Cities Initiative to build on work which has already begun in the areas of Social Inclusion and Gifted and Talented students. In an attempt to meet obvious needs and to maintain and raise levels of student self esteem, the school has entered into a Post 16 Outreach operation with Manchester College of Arts and Technology, whereby Post 16 provision can be delivered locally on site with appropriate pastoral support. The school is now in the middle of a £2.5 million building programme that will deliver over 200 Post 16 places. The school continues to be significantly oversubscribed.

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

Newall Green is a very good school with significant strengths. It is innovative and highly successful at implementing initiatives to meet the needs of its students. Standards of attainment are improving and are particularly creditable given the students' prior achievements. Students progress well as the result of good quality teaching. The standard of leadership and management shown by the headteacher is excellent. Students' personal development is significantly enhanced by an ethos which is supportive yet also based upon high expectations. The staff have a strong commitment to continuing improvement. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good. Relationships are very good; a mutual respect is evident amongst staff and students. The school gives very good value for money.

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

- The leadership and management provided by key staff are very strong.
- The quality of teaching is good; it is often very good or better.
- The overall achievement of students is good; they make significant gains in their attainment levels.
- The quality of care, support and guidance for students is very good; assessment and monitoring procedures are very effective.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is very good as is the quality and range of the extra- curricular provision.

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

- Standards of attainment relative to national averages in tests and examinations particularly in modern languages.
- Levels of attendance and punctuality.
- An emphasis on learning styles; developing students' independent learning skills.
- The application and assessment of information and communication technology in subjects.
- The standards of literacy and numeracy skills within subjects.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since its previous inspection in 1996. Standards of attainment and the students' achievements have been raised substantially particularly in GCSE examinations. The school now uses assessment data more effectively to identify underachievement and establish targets for improvement. Pastoral teams have become increasingly and successfully involved in this process. The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly. Lesson planning is more consistent; the school has adopted a standard format thereby creating a greater coherence in its work. The school has improved its assessment procedures and uses the information gained on students' progress to adjust its planning and to set clear targets for students. The curriculum has greater breadth and relevance to the needs of students; the vocational elements are now a strength of the provision. The personal and social education programme has been further developed; it enhances students' maturity and citizenship awareness. The Arts College provision has added another significant dimension to the life of the school. Levels of attendance and punctuality are gradually improving but remain an area for continuing efforts. The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions has been significantly reduced. Whilst the facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) have been increased, the planned use of computers in subjects remains an issue. The school has responded well to government initiatives and has in consequence improved funding. A greater commitment to a communal act of worship is evident but the school is unable to fully meet the statutory requirement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	A

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average     E

In the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds, overall results were well below the national average. In English attainment was well below the national average but in line with the standards achieved in similar schools. Attainment in mathematics and science was significantly below national averages but comparable to the performance of similar schools. On balance, the trend in the school's performance was better than the national picture. The overall standards achieved were in line with the results for schools with students from similar backgrounds.

In GCSE examinations, overall results were well below the national average. However, in comparison with similar schools the standard of attainment of students was well above average. Given the students' relatively low level of prior attainment the grades achieved in the range A\* to C placed the school in the top 5% nationally. These results represent significant added value on behalf of students – a fact recognised by the Technology College Trust, which has presented the school with an 'Achievement Award'. The trend of improvement in GCSE standards has been similar to the national picture. Boys' achievement tends to be better than that of the girls especially in science. Examination performance in most subjects is well below national figures, with particularly low standards being achieved in business studies and modern languages. However, students achieved well in art and design, humanities and drama, reaching standards which were close to national expectations. The school successfully met its challenging target for GCSE examination performance of 32 per cent for students gaining 5 or more A\* to C grades.

Overall attainment in lessons at the end of the current Year 9 is below national expectations. It is broadly in line with the national average in art, music, drama and physical education. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is predominately good. Attainment improves in most subjects through Years 10



and 11 but generally remains below average. Attainment in expressive arts and physical education is in line with national expectations. The achievement of students, given their prior attainment, is generally good through these later years. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented is good.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most students are enthusiastic about their studies and many take an active part in the wide range of opportunities provided for them. A small minority of students are de-motivated and show a lack of interest in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. In lessons most students behave well; they are interested and concentrate well. A few students can be difficult and disruptive. Behaviour outside lessons is generally good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships in the school are very good and help promote learning. Students respond very well to the provision for personal development.
Attendance	Attendance rates are below the national average; though attendance continues to improve. Punctuality for a significant minority is unsatisfactory.

The school's impressive work on social inclusion has been the key factor in reducing exclusions.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. There were examples of excellent teaching in English, science, geography and humanities. Teaching is very good in music and the expressive arts. On balance, teaching in most subjects meets the needs of all students very well. A very small amount of teaching was unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. The skills of literacy are taught well; the teaching of numeracy is less well developed and is generally satisfactory. Across the school, the main teaching strengths are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, effective planning, high expectations and the good support and encouragement for students. The rapport and positive relationships between staff and students are significant features of most lessons. On the few occasions where lessons were unsatisfactory the students were not challenged sufficiently or the learning material was not varied enough to cater for the ability range within the class. Students gain new knowledge quite well and their understanding of issues shows increasing levels of maturity. Students generally work hard and concentrate well on their studies. The quality of written work and homework can vary markedly. Students are too reliant on teachers for their knowledge; they need to be helped to become more independent learners and to take more responsibility for their own learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. The general course for personal and social education (PSE) is good. The extra-curricular activities provided for students are very good in their range and variety.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The learning support department helps these students very well. A good standard of assistance is provided for students with statements of special needs throughout the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good overall. The school is very successful in helping students to be friendly and courteous and developing their sense of right and wrong. Cultural development of students is very good and is enhanced by trips and visits. Spiritual development is very effectively addressed in assemblies and in lessons when opportunities present themselves.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Staff know students very well and are vigilant in carrying out the school's arrangements for student welfare. Pastoral teams provide very effective support and guidance for students.

The school works well with parents. It has efficient systems for making contact with parents should problems occur. The procedures for child protection and monitoring students' welfare are excellent.

The curriculum is innovative and imaginative. All students follow courses in humanities and expressive arts. The Arts College status has significantly raised the profile and involvement of students in the performing arts. Vocational education is very effectively incorporated into the curriculum through a range of GNVQ courses and a work experience component. The shortage of curriculum time for science, modern foreign languages, music and drama is a weakness.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher are outstanding. His commitment and energy are very good exemplars for staff and students. A very effective leadership group ably supports him. The quality of faculty and pastoral management are also strengths of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; there is an effective and efficient committee structure. Communication between the school and governors is open and productive.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Effective systems for review and evaluation are in place. Assessment data is being used efficiently to identify targets. Performance management has been very successfully implemented. The commitment to improvement by all staff is excellent.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Detailed planning enables resources to be efficiently deployed. There is a systematic identification of priorities and clear indication of action to be taken.

The governors fully meet the statutory requirements for the curriculum but requirements are not met in relation to a daily act of collective worship.

The overall provision for staffing, learning resources and accommodation is good. There are areas for further development: the library stock in some subjects is outdated and it is insufficiently used as a resource during lesson time. The accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory and music has insufficient teaching and practice rooms.

Leadership and management of the Arts College, special educational needs and the provision for gifted and talented students are very good. Aspects of the management of design and technology such as monitoring and evaluation of its work are unsatisfactory.

Financial planning is very effective and relates well to the school's priorities for improvement. The school consults a range of people about financial matters and obtains resources at a competitive price. It uses them in the best possible way to meet its aims.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like coming to school and they make good progress</li><li>• The teaching is good</li><li>• The expectation that students work hard and achieve of their best</li><li>• The school is approachable and well led</li><li>• The extra-curricular provision is very good</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The information they get about their children's progress</li><li>• Working more closely with parents</li><li>• The amount of homework set</li></ul>

Parents' views of the school are positive; the concerns expressed are the views of a small minority. The inspectors agree with the supportive views summarised in the table above. They do not agree with parents' concerns. The use of targets and detailed reports give parents a good analysis of students' progress and achievements. The level of homework and the schedule of times is appropriate to the differing needs of students. The school makes significant efforts to involve and engage parents in its activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The overall attainment of students on entry to the school is well below average. A significant number of students have low-level skills in literacy and numeracy.
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds, overall results were well below the national average. However, the overall standards achieved were in line with the results for schools with students from similar backgrounds. On balance, the trend in the school's performance was better than the national picture. In GCSE examinations, overall results were well below the national average. However, in comparison with similar schools the standard of attainment of students was well above average. Given the students' relatively low level of prior attainment the grades achieved in the range A\* to C placed the school in the top 5% nationally. These results represent significant added value on behalf of students – a fact recognised by the Technology College Trust, which has presented the school with an 'Achievement Award'. The trend of improvement in GCSE standards has been similar to the national picture. Boys' achievement tends to be better than that of the girls. The school successfully met its challenging target for GCSE examination performance of 32 per cent for 5 or more A\* to C grades.
3. Students' attainment in English upon entry into school is well below average in all aspects of language and literacy. However, students then go on to achieve well in relation to their prior ability in Years 7 to 9, though standards at 14 remain below average. This is reflected in the 2001 National Curriculum tests where attainment was well below the national average, though average when compared to schools with a similar intake. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection and are better than those in mathematics and science. Standards in GCSE English and English Literature remain below average with four out of ten students achieving A\* to C grades. Standards at age 16 have improved since the last inspection with GCSE results being above those in mathematics and science. Girls outperform boys in both key stages. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11, with added value between the two key stages being very good. Overall standards in literacy are below average.
4. Standards in mathematics on entry to the school are well below the national average. Results in the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were very low compared with the national average. Set against similar schools, the results were about average. The trend over the last three years, in terms of the average National Curriculum points score, has been above the national trend. In 2001, boys' attainment exceeded that of girls', against the national picture for this year. Since 1999 boys' attainment has been greater than that of girls' – in line with the national trend, but by a wider margin. There were no significant differences apparent in the results of other different groups of students. Standards in mathematics over the last three years have been below those in English and similar to those in science. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the proportion of students at age 16 achieving A\* to C grades was very low compared with the national average proportion. However, the figures are about average compared with similar schools. There has been a rising trend in results over the last three years. In 2001 girls' standards were lower than boys. This is contrary to the national situation. There were no apparent differences found in the results of other different groups of students. In 2001 standards attained at GCSE were better in English and science than

in mathematics. On balance achievement in mathematics is very good. Overall standards in numeracy are below average.

5. In the 2001 national science tests, Year 9 students performed at a very low level. Since the previous inspection standards have remained consistently very low. When compared with standards in similar schools in 2001, students' attainment was close to the national average. The trend in standards in science since the last inspection has been broadly in line with the improving national trend, except in 2001 when the rise was less noticeable. The trend in standards since the last inspection has been similar to that in mathematics but less than in English. Overall, boys have performed better than girls in national tests. GCSE results for the double award science examination in 2001 were significantly below the national average for the subject. Slightly more than one student in three reached the higher grades (A\*-C) whilst nationally one in two obtained the same grades. In 2001, there was a significant increase in the number of students obtaining the higher grades. This improvement resulted from closer monitoring of students' progress in Year 10 and Year 11, setting ambitious, yet achievable, targets, teaching gifted and talented students in sets and focussing closely upon the progress of those students who had the potential to obtain a grade C. Very few students reached the highest grades (A\*-B) because their attainment is low and they are entered for a restricted grade GCSE examination. The very small group of lower-attaining students entered for the single science award in 2001 confirmed predictions and obtained the lowest grades (E-G). Overall, the full range of grades (A\*-G) obtained by the students was close to the national picture. The GCSE results in science were better than in mathematics but not as good as in English. Boys' performance at the higher grades (A\*-C) in 2001 was very much better than that of girls and grade predictions show that this performance is likely to be repeated in the 2002 GCSE examination. This is an issue for the school to address.
6. Art, dance, drama and music are taught to students as separate components of an expressive and performing arts course. Each makes a strong contribution to the provision in this area of the school's work. Currently there are no test or examination results for dance, as this is the first year for examination candidates. In art the proportion of students attaining level 5+ in attainment target assessments at the end of Year 9 is below the national average, which reflects student ability. GCSE results are below the national average but are the best in the school. However, if the current Year 10 group achieve the predicted results which are based both on firm evidence and reflect work seen during the inspection, then the proportion gaining A\* to C grades will be close to the national average. The photography course introduced last year was very successful, and all students entered gained A\*-C grades. Three quarters of the art cohort are boys, which is significant bearing in mind the good results since nationally girls out-perform boys.
7. Students achieve well in the development of drama skills and techniques, with attainment by the time they are 14 being in line with expectations for their age. Standards in the subject have improved since the time of the last inspection. Students continue to achieve well in relation to their prior learning in Years 10 and 11. Standards in most recent GCSE examinations in 2001 were above the national average, with the current group of students in Year 11 expected to achieve grades in line with the national average. Standards in the subject have improved since the last inspection.
8. Standards of attainment in music are just above the national average by the end of Year 9, as confirmed by the department's most recent assessments. Given students' prior attainment they make overall good progress across Years 7 to 9, with often good progress in individual lessons, due largely to the very good quality of teaching and the

good attitudes of the students. GCSE results in recent years have been consistently below the national average, with numbers getting smaller over the past three years. This situation reflects the instability of staffing during that period. The music department staffing is now settled, with the immediate result that 48 students are currently studying music in Year 10.

9. In 2001, design and technology teacher assessments for Year 9 indicate standards which are well below average. Given the low level of practical skills on entry, achievement is satisfactory. The GCSE examination results were below the national average. Overall achievement was satisfactory. In some areas such as food technology and graphic products, progress was better.
10. History and geography are taught to students in Years 7 to 9, and they make a strong contribution to the modular humanities course followed at GCSE. Students' standards in history by Year 9 are below expectation, but this represents good achievement given the low entry standards. The teacher assessments of last year's Year 9 students were well below national average, but were based on a written examination that required too high a level of literacy for the majority of students, and do not represent the higher standards of work seen during the inspection. Standards of attainment in geography at the end of Year 9 are also below national expectations. There has been a steady improvement in students' attainment at the end of Year 9; this represents good progress throughout Years 7 to 9. Standards in humanities at GCSE are just below the national average, and are well above the results of the same students in other subjects. This is an improvement over the standards in the previous two years. All students in Years 10 and 11 study humanities, with around 90 per cent of the year group being entered for the examination each year. The high proportion of ungraded students in relation to national figures is in part the result of incomplete coursework or non-attendance at examinations. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs have good results in relation to their ability, but very few of the able students in the last three years have attained A\* or A grades. In relation to their standard at the start of Year 10 and their performance in other subjects, students' achievement is good.
11. In the 2001 assessments for ICT, the number of students attaining the higher levels was below national averages. In the GCSE ICT short course results for 2001 the number of students who gained A\* to C grades was below national averages. A very high number of students were entered for this examination and almost all gained a grade. These results are reflected in standards in the classroom, which are below national expectations in all years.
12. Standards in modern languages at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below the national average. Girls' and boys' scores were similar except at the lowest level where there were more boys than girls. Given the students' low standards of language competence on entry this represents good achievement. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below average in both French and German, with only a small number gaining a C grade in French, and just one student gaining a D grade in German. The standard in German shows no change over the last three years, whilst in French there is a slightly improving trend over the same period. In comparison with other subjects in the school, French standards were below average and German was well below average. This represented poor achievement in French and very poor in German.
13. By the end of Year 9 overall standards in physical education are close to the national average. Achievement through the key stage is good. The 2001 GCSE results in physical education were well below the national average for A\* to C grades. Over the

last 4 years the trend of results has been upwards in the course which started at the time of the last inspection. The department's analysis of these most recent results shows clearly that many students achieved their best results in this subject.

14. By the end of Year 9, attainment in religious education is below the national average. Students enter school with low attainment but good progress is made and the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results are well below the national average but in comparison with similar schools, the number of A to C grades is above average. The achievement of students through the key stage is good.
15. Overall students with special needs achieve well and make good progress over time. In 2001 there were Year 11 students with special needs who entered the school with very low attainment but gained between three and eight GCSE grades A to G. Students with special needs achieve lower standards than their peers. On entry to the school some students have a reading age of six. Extra support throughout their time in school raises this by a matter of months for some students with the highest need. In Year 8 support has raised reading ages from nine to eleven in a matter of terms for other students with special need. Additional support and extended activities allow identified gifted and talented students to make accelerated progress in their learning.

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

16. Students show positive attitudes towards school and their work, behave well, form very good relationships and their personal development is good. The good partnership with parents together with the very good spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development at school make significant contributions to these positive attitudes and values. Overall, there have been important improvements in students' personal standards since the previous inspection.
17. Students' attitudes to school are good overall. For example, discussions with Year 7 students produce a long list of things that they like about school. They would recommend the school to others and cite the wide range of opportunities provided by clubs and the facilities, such as athletics and computers. They also speak positively about friendly teachers who make learning interesting, the very good relationships among students and the high quality of school dinners. This group also ranked school ahead of friends and hobbies and only behind family in a list of the important things in their lives. In the discussions with all year groups, students indicate a good level of satisfaction with what is provided and there is a noticeable absence of things which they would like to see improved. Take-up of the diverse range of extra-curricular activities is good. Nevertheless, the below average attendance and parental questionnaire responses show that a small minority of students do not like school. In most lessons, most students present listen well and show good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Most students' favourite subjects and lessons are those where they are practically involved, such as in physical education, art, drama and design technology. In contrast, fewer students enjoy English or mathematics. The best attitudes and behaviour occur in lessons where expectations are high, work is demanding and students are busy and engaged in a variety of practical activities, which provide the right level of challenge for them. Most students with special educational needs are positive about the extra support they get.
18. Behaviour is good overall. Throughout the day, nearly all students behave sensibly. In just a few lessons, there is some distracting behaviour, mostly caused by boys, which

adversely affects students' learning. In corridors, at breaktimes, lunchtime and between lessons, students move about in a strikingly calm fashion, free of any boisterous running or jostling, for example. This contributes significantly to the prevailing positive, relaxed and inclusive atmosphere. Similarly a calm sociable atmosphere prevails in the dining halls. Students confirm that racist or sexist behaviour is very rare, with strong peer group pressure helping to make these unacceptable. They also indicate that bullying is confined to a small minority of students and that such incidents are decisively addressed, once reported to staff. Nearly all students take good care of property and resources and help keep their school in an attractive condition. In the previous and current year, there has been a substantial decline in both fixed term and permanent exclusions, which are now broadly in line with the national average. The school's impressive work on social inclusion has been the key factor in reducing exclusions. Parents' questionnaire responses fully support this positive picture. Parents, teaching and non teaching staff are all clear that improvement in students' behaviour, since the previous inspection, has led to a more positive atmosphere in school.

19. Relationships between adults and students and among students are very good overall. Nearly all adults act as very good role models. Teachers value students' work and most effectively praise effort and good work. For example, students in all year groups mention the positive support provided by teachers and the fair way in which they are treated as a key reason why they like school. As a result, in most lessons students are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. This assists their learning. Very good relationships among students, including those with special educational needs, is a positive feature. As a result, in lessons most students work very well in pairs and small groups by supporting each others' learning, for example with explanations.
20. Students' personal development is good overall. Nearly all students show consistent respect for the clearly set out expectations on behaviour outside classrooms. Most students routinely show responsibility and thought for others in the way they hold doors open for each other and adults, for example. Most are comfortable speaking with visitors. When questioned in groups, nearly all students show respect for different views expressed by others. Most students show concern for others, if they are ill or otherwise upset. The school council comprising two students from each year group, is making a real contribution to the life of the school, as key members of staff seek their views and value and support their initiatives. For example, their requests for lockers and a new school bus service have been implemented. Similarly their views about chip size and other issues have made an important contribution to the impressive quality of food provided in the new dining facilities. The council has also forged good links with a range of outside groups that enhance its work. However, evidence of students taking the initiative to make choices in their learning is somewhat less than usually seen, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
21. Despite rising steadily since the previous inspection, attendance is still below the national average. Similarly unauthorised absence has declined significantly in recent years but is above the national average. Analysis of the data reveals some striking features. Attendance is considerably better in Years 7 and 8 than in later years. Gifted and talented forms have the highest attendance in three of the four year groups in which there is such a form. Attendance is lowest among lower set students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Punctuality is unsatisfactory for some students. A significant minority of students, in Years 10 and 11 especially, are regularly late for school. Nearly all of those students who are present get to lessons promptly during the rest of the day, however. There is no significant level of internal or external truancy, due



in significant part to close supervision at school and contact with home on the first day of absence.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. Students are taught well throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good with many examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching. In over one lesson in every four, the teaching was of high quality. There was a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Examples of excellence were seen in English, science, geography and humanities lessons. Teaching was very good in music and the expressive arts. The overall quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. The teaching of literacy skills is effectively carried out in a number of lessons; the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory but not so widespread. On balance the teaching meets the needs of students well. The teaching of students with special educational needs and talented students is good and effectively focussed on their needs. Standards of teaching have improved since the previous inspection.
23. Teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to the students and the school. They form a self-critical group, supporting one another well. The school has a very good programme for professional development and training. Each member of the leadership team supports other teams of teachers. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning.
24. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and expertise, and show enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their students. For example, in a Year 7 textiles lesson, which involved making a pencil case, the teacher's very good knowledge and description of a range of materials enhanced students' learning. The appropriate use of praise and encouragement helped motivate them. In humanities, the teachers' expertise enables them to explain specialist vocabulary and develop students' own use of this very well. In a Year 7 language lesson based on hobbies, the very good standard of German spoken by the teacher provided a very effective role model for students. The high quality of planning shown in the lesson gave a clear structure to the students' learning.
25. Detailed lesson planning is a good feature of most lessons. In English, teachers plan lessons carefully. They write objectives on the board so that students know what they have to achieve and, in the best lessons, they usually evaluate with students how well they have met them. Teachers often plan a variety of activities in lessons to interest students and to keep them learning at a good pace. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson dealing with co-ordinates the careful planning gave a purposeful start to the lesson. The students were immediately engaged in activities and showed high levels of interest. In this productive environment students were willing to take chances, keen to answer questions and learn from their mistakes. In a Year 9 history lesson, which focussed on the effect of war on different countries, the effective planning provided learning opportunities for the range of abilities in the class. The lesson built well on the students' previous knowledge. The teachers' planning also enabled the good development of literacy and numeracy skills. This included systematically arranging numerical data and the reinforcement of key words. On the very few occasions where lessons were unsatisfactory the learning activities were not varied enough to accommodate the range of ability within the class. Students became de-motivated and this inevitably led to bouts of silly, disruptive behaviour.
26. Teachers generally have high expectations of students' performance. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson on the power of speech the teacher skilfully elicited from the

students the elements of persuasive and emotive language. The students were then set a challenging task of writing their own impassioned speech on topics such as foxhunting or the impact of the car on the environment. In art, teachers expect students to take responsibility for the development of their work at appropriate phases of projects. This means that by Year 10 they can make decisions, which create individuality in the ways they work. In general, staff make every effort to provide an environment which promotes success. In the best lessons, teachers move briskly from one task to another. This ensures that students sustain their concentration. There are good levels of productivity in a number of subjects and learning proceeds at a good pace.

27. The active involvement of students helps to sustain interest and enhances their learning. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson on the reactivity of metals the thinking of students was stimulated by probing questions. As a result of this work students were able to conduct and write up their own detailed experimental reports. This produces a good dialogue between the teacher and students that extends the students' knowledge and achieves a greater understanding of the topic taught. The engagement of students through effective questioning was apparent in a Year 10 humanities lesson on poverty. The questioning technique provided a good role model for assessing information. The teacher used technical vocabulary well and insisted that the students used this in their work.
28. The management and control of students in lessons are generally good. The good relationships between students and staff help to create a positive climate for learning in most lessons. Staff use praise in an effective manner to raise students' self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. In a Year 11 art lesson where students were completing the final elements of their coursework, the teacher's supportive and very good relationship with them produced an environment conducive to creativity and independent learning. In humanities lessons, relationships are very good and teachers know their students well. Behaviour is more often good and sometimes very good when the tasks set by teachers are well matched to students' interest and intellect and as a result students enjoy what they do.
29. Time and learning resources are used well by most teachers. In a Year 9 music lesson dealing with African rhythms the teacher made very effective use of an overhead projector to reinforce the ideas being taught. She used her voice well to teach an African song. The use of ICT in teaching is generally unsatisfactory; the use of computer resources is very much dependent upon the interest, expertise and enthusiasm of subject teachers.
30. The homework set is usually purposeful and challenging and is used well to reinforce learning. Good opportunities are provided for accelerated learning in some lessons. A range of visits and visitors to the school motivates students and promotes their learning. Ongoing assessment of students' learning and developmental needs is good. The marking of work is generally frequent and thorough. However, there are some inconsistencies within and between departments on the use of National Curriculum levels to indicate attainment. In lessons teachers give appropriate feedback and also support and praise. Assessment data and performance data are effectively analysed by teachers and staff with pastoral responsibilities to set targets for students to achieve.
31. Students are keen to achieve well and make good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Students need further encouragement to become independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning; this is a strong

feature of the best lessons. Given the low levels of students' previous achievements their intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.

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

32. The school provides a broad, balanced and innovative curriculum that is matched to the needs of its students. Most subjects are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7. The setting of students is introduced in Year 8 and is more extensive in Year 9. Although this is based within two parallel bands, students identified as gifted and talented are taught in a 'top' set in one band only. Students are taught in mixed ability classes in some subjects in Years 10 and 11. All students with special educational needs are supported and have full access to the curriculum. The school has strong links with the local community through the Education Action Zone and effective links with partner institutions such as primary schools and the College of Arts and Technology. Students greatly benefit from the extra opportunities that result from these links.
33. The breadth of the curriculum is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 as it includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, together with a programme of personal and social education and drama. Effective strategies for the development of literacy are in place and the promotion of numeracy is satisfactory and improving. Whilst the curriculum provision is full and appropriate there are constraints on time allocations. Some subjects such as science, modern languages, music and drama receive a lower time allocation than recommendations. Generally the time-period allocation is used efficiently and outcomes are monitored to ensure students are not disadvantaged. For example, although science time is below recommendations, dual science GCSE is now the accepted pattern for the school.
34. The school has an appropriate equal opportunities policy and departments follow these guidelines. No problems pertaining to equality of opportunity within the curriculum were reported. The curriculum is open to all. Free choice operates when students select subjects for study; however, within technology students do choose in accordance with gender stereotypes.
35. Literacy across the curriculum is more actively promoted than it was at the time of the last inspection. There is a specific member of staff responsible for its promotion and a whole-school policy for the curriculum. All staff have been involved in literacy training; subject handbooks now contain clear policy statements and examples for the development of literacy.
36. The planned provision for numeracy within subjects is still developing. Most, but not all, subjects have a numeracy policy and, in their schemes of work, reference to key objectives for the consolidation, application or development of numeracy. The school recently had a successful numeracy training day. A whole-school numeracy audit has now been carried out. The next stage of the process is to compile a whole-school numeracy handbook and policy. These planned activities will improve the provision for numeracy across the curriculum and promote students' access to the numerical aspects of subjects.
37. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is creative and imaginative. In addition to the core subjects, humanities, ICT, religious education and expressive arts are compulsory elements for all students. Few students follow modern foreign language courses; the majority is dispensed from the study of languages to enable students to concentrate on

achieving success in English. On balance this is a sound strategy for raising standards of achievement. The ICT curriculum provision through a discrete course in Years 7 to 9 is appropriate to the needs of students. An ICT course is also compulsory in Years 10 and 11 and leads to short course GCSE. Some students choose to follow a vocational course, leading to GNVQ in ICT. However, the ICT provision and use in other subjects is generally unsatisfactory. The impressive vocational provision is apparent in GNVQ courses such as manufacturing and science. The school is embarking on an innovative course in 'Enterprise'. This is being developed in conjunction with Manchester University and local business.

38. The school achieved Arts College status with effect from September 2000. Since then, music, art, dance and drama have developed significantly in the school. Direct successes are diverse at both local and national level. The school has gained Gold Arts Mark status. It features prominently in the Manchester Arts in Education Festival, and is part of the Creative Arts Partnership in Education. The appointment of lead artists within various art forms has forged firm links with partner and feeder schools, enabling primary school pupils to develop a range of artistic skills. The creation of the Wythenshawe Schools Centre for Music in the school has raised its profile in the community, offering a wide range of musical opportunities to pre-school children up to Post 16 students. Links have been developed with adult education, the youth service and Manchester College of Arts and Technology, among others, through association with the Community Leadership Team. Plans are in hand for the Arts College to participate as a pilot model in an arts and business enterprise. Students have been selected to take part in the celebrations for the Commonwealth Games, which will take place in the summer. These few examples demonstrate the breadth and depth of the impact that the arts subjects in the school are having.
39. The Arts College has settled successfully into the overall ethos of the school, and other members of staff are supportive of its aims. Cross-curriculum projects have ensured that the Arts College is not isolated. There have, for example, been links of science and dance with Year 7 students through a project on the human reproductive system, and of Pythagoras and the arts with the mathematics department. Members of the community regard the Arts College favourably. Not one parent objected to the proposal that every student in Years 10 and 11 should study at least one discrete or expressive arts subject to examination level.
40. An 'alternative curriculum' is provided for part of the week for those students who are at risk of being non-attenders. This course offers a combination of work on site with partner institutions off-site and work experience placements. This alternative curriculum is successful and has led to an improvement in the attitudes of participating students.
41. Provision for personal and social education (PSE) is broad, dealing with self-esteem, schoolwork, jobs, finances, health, morals, values, spiritual development and tolerance. Issues of drugs and sex education are appropriately and effectively covered in this programme. Provision for careers and vocational education within PSE is good. 'Careers days' are appropriately provided for all students in Years 7 to 11. A further programme of career education is taught in Years 10 and 11 as a preparation for work experience.
42. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Students benefit greatly from a wide range of sporting and other leisure activities. Students also attend 'academic' clubs; for example, a lunchtime mathematics club gives younger students the opportunity to use ICT to develop numeracy skills. English and science clubs are also

run at weekends. The clubs provide a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere and are helping to raise standards in the school. The performing arts are also well represented in these activities; music, dance and drama clubs being particularly well attended.

43. Effective and positive links are developed through the Education Action Zone. The promotion of the alternative curriculum relies heavily on the strength of the links with other institutions. Finances generated from these links are used to support the curriculum and resource levels.
44. The school's provision for spiritual development is very good. Opportunities are provided to explore values and beliefs especially in religious education, history, geography, the expressive arts and technology. Art especially encourages self-awareness and self-esteem. A mutual respect exists between staff and students, which is highlighted in the staff induction programme. Students learn to respect diversity through the 'Barrier Free' initiative whereby the school is resourced for the physically disabled. School visitors provide opportunities for spiritual development. For example, following a visit from a Holocaust survivor, Year 8 students heard that he had never seen a photograph of his family. Some students were able to track down a picture of his sister and then presented it to him. Collective worship is well planned, well disciplined and led very well. Time is given for reflection, and music is played as students enter the hall creating an atmosphere of thoughtfulness. Although collective worship is now provided twice a week, which is an increase since the last inspection, the legal requirements are still not met.
45. The provision for moral development is very good. The code of conduct is displayed in the corridor and collective worship reinforces how to treat each other through themes such as 'Neighbours'. Moral issues and consequences of behaviour are discussed in religious education, PSE, English, expressive arts and modern foreign languages. In art, students are encouraged to take their own and others' work seriously which creates a sense of valuing and of being valued. The school council enables students to be involved in making decisions.
46. The provision for social development is very good. Opportunities exist in many subjects for students to work co-operatively, collaboratively and discuss relationships. The large variety of extra-curricular activities also enables students to interact well together. The library contributes to students' social development by being easily accessible during lunchtime, after school and on Saturday morning; students openly appreciate these opportunities. The strong pastoral system is very supportive of students and teachers are considered by students to be friendly.
47. The provision for cultural development is very good. The multicultural Arts Festival allows the school to follow a common theme: this year it is Africa; past themes have been South America and Judaism. Cultural awareness is enhanced by initiatives between departments such as religious education and dance, working collaboratively on a Hindu project for Year 8 where work was displayed in a local gallery. The history department organises many visits and visitors dealing with topics such as the World Wars and the Holocaust. The expressive arts team provides opportunities for students to study different cultures and issues of racism, for example, the story of Rosa Parkes. The school's anti-racism policy needs updating to be in line with recent government legislation.
48. The ethos of the school is underpinned by the very good opportunities offered for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. There is, however, no

whole-school policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and no audit of its provision.

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

49. Both pastoral and academic support for students is now very good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school's innovative work on social inclusion, as part of the Education Action Zone and Excellence in Cities has been central to the improvement in pastoral support and has led to striking outcomes in terms of reduced exclusions and rising attendance.
50. Procedures to promote and ensure students' well-being are excellent. The key feature is the practice, made possible by the Wythenshaw Education Action Zone, whereby a range of professionals work as a team, managed by the school. Multi-agency support based on shared information and team problem-solving is a highly effective and routine feature. As a result, the quality of support provided for the significant proportion of vulnerable students, some with very complex problems, is of an excellent standard. Underpinned by the above arrangements, child protection procedures and those for looked-after students are very good. The procedures to follow and the designated staff members are known by adults in the school. Students are made appropriately aware of this issue as part of their personal and social education. Students confirm that they are very well cared for when they are ill or otherwise distressed.
51. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety are good. Teachers make students aware of health and safety issues in lessons, such as in physical education and science. This effectively contributes to the development of a safety conscious attitude among them. Clear reporting arrangements of hazards and risks within departments, supplemented by regular visual inspections and clear responsibilities, ensure that health and safety issues are addressed in a timely manner. Fire alarm testing and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out. Fire drills are carried out regularly. First aid arrangements are well established and appropriate.
52. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are good. The positive behaviour policy and associated merits and rewards system provide a coherent basis for student behaviour, discipline and personal development. The main emphasis is on recognising and rewarding good behaviour and most students respond positively. Measures to create and maintain discipline are appropriate, proportionate and consistently applied by most staff.
53. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, including bullying, are very good. There is a clear proportionate set of sanctions, in relation to unacceptable classroom behaviour. Widely displayed rules in relation to the playground, corridors and toilets provide very clear expectations about behaviour outside the classroom. The teaching and lunchtime staff feel very well supported by the headteacher and senior staff in relation to incidents in classes and outside. Parents are very effectively involved where concerns arise. Students confirm that the measures taken to resolve incidents of bullying or other anti-social behaviour are usually very effective. Centered around learning mentors in each year group, provided as part of Excellence in Cities, the multi-agency team approach to addressing students' difficulties has led to a major decline in fixed and permanent exclusions.
54. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are very good. Systems for collecting raw attendance data are very good, whilst measures to recognise high attendance are frequent and very effective. The additional support provided, as part of Excellence in

Cities, is having a very positive impact. For example, learning mentors have played a key part in raising attendance and reducing unauthorised absence. Similarly the alternative curriculum, provided in Years 10 and 11, has had an important impact on the attendance of students who find school uninteresting, whilst helping them to sample future work possibilities. Systematic contact with parents on the first day of absence also contributes very well. Most parents are positive about this measure which has led to greatly reduced external truancy.

55. Procedures for the assessment of students' attainment and progress are very good. The school very fully evaluates the attainment and progress of students of different genders and abilities, including the gifted and talented and all those with special educational needs. There has been both improvement and consolidation of good practice since the last inspection.
56. Students' attainment is assessed throughout the school against national standards and the progress of individuals is monitored in all subjects. In essence, the system in place is based on the collection and central storage, for each subject, of six assessment results each year. National Curriculum levels are sub-divided into a, b or c. This ensures that students can 'see' their progress over a reasonable time scale. The six pieces of assessment information are gathered from two formal examinations, including national tests and examinations and four departmental assessments. For Years 7, 8 and 9 one of these must be from a sophisticated commercial on-line assessment package, partially sponsored by the Education Action Zone. The tests are taken on-line and marked and returned within 20 minutes. This instant marking has proved very popular with students.
57. In the great majority of subject areas, teachers use assessment information very well to guide their plans for what students should learn next, but it is less effectively, although still satisfactorily, used in design and technology, religious education and physical education.
58. Assessment is very well used to support and encourage students' learning. The assessment results in each subject are set against the individual targets, which are calculated each year using nationally recognised statistical procedures and test results. Although there are whole-school marking and assessment policies, subjects are allowed some degree of freedom as to how they implement them. The fundamental principle is that students must know how they are progressing in their subjects. As an aid to this, subjects have effective wall displays showing students' work that has been levelled. The senior management team monitor assessment materials well to ensure they are of the highest quality. Heads of faculty sample exercise books every four weeks or so, to ensure that the whole-school marking policy is correctly adhered to.
59. Students are aware of their targets and their progress towards them. In fact they are encouraged to challenge the latter so they become more fully involved in the assessment of their own progress. Each student has at least one one-to-one interview a year with their form tutor to review their progress towards their targets. The master sheets showing students' assessment and target data are monitored regularly by form tutors and heads of faculty. Parents are involved as soon as there are concerns over progress. Because there are assessments about every seven weeks, intervention can take place before minor problems develop into major ones.
60. Assessment is seen as playing a crucial part in the raising of standards. As a result a yearly training day with guest speaker is held which is devoted to assessment. Assessment is a fixed item on academic board and staff meetings. Senior

management uses national assessment data as a negotiating tool with which to set targets for subjects. Heads of faculty monitor the performance within different sets and years in their subjects.

61. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are very good. Targets, which are regularly monitored and updated, provide very well focused support for individuals' academic and personal development. The active school council makes an important and growing contribution to school life and provides very good personal development opportunities for its members. Good work and attitudes are regularly celebrated in assemblies. This recognition and reward provides students with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise their self-esteem, particularly of students in Years 7 to 9. The personal, social and health education program makes a good contribution to students' personal development.

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

62. As at the previous inspection, the partnership with parents makes a good contribution overall to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved.
63. Parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves. Nearly a quarter of parents replied to the questionnaire and 11 attended the pre-inspection meeting. Most parents rightly recognise that the school is improving steadily in a number of key areas, such as academic standards and in the support and opportunities provided for students. Most consider that their students make good progress in a well managed school, which they feel comfortable approaching with suggestions, questions or concerns. They consider that the school has high expectations and helps students become more mature and responsible. They are positive about the teaching and most students' attitudes and behaviour. Nevertheless there are some concerns about the quantity and regularity of homework and the amount of information they get on students' progress, particularly in Year 7. As a result, nearly a fifth of parents do not consider that the school works closely with them. A few parents, at the parents' meeting, expressed concerns about staffing changes, the lack of ready access to computers and the lack of resources, such as textbooks in a range of subjects. Inspection evidence fully supports parents' positive views and does not identify any significant problem in relation to their concerns. Nevertheless the school sensibly plans to monitor homework levels more closely and to hold the Year 7 parents' evening earlier in the year.
64. Links with parents make a very good contribution to students' learning. Parents find school staff approachable. All students have planners, which enable good routine communication between school and home about homework and students' achievements. Parents are fully involved where there are concerns about students' progress, behaviour or attendance. The school seeks and listens to the views of parents. For example, it has recently innovatively gathered the views of parents attending consultation evenings on a range of issues using a questionnaire. Their views are also sought on specific matters that concern them, such as the home-school agreement, uniforms and the behaviour policy.
65. The quality of information to support students' progress is very good. Subject target-setting information, together with areas for improvement in attitudes, is very effectively shared with parents and students. Students' annual reports are of good quality. Regular, frequent newsletters keep parents well informed on on-going school life. School-related information is of very good quality. The governors' annual report



provides a very good insight into the main issues which the governing body is working on. The prospectus gives a clear outline of the school's expectations and character.

66. Parents' involvement with the work of the school makes a satisfactory contribution to students' learning and the life of the school. Most parents are keen that their children do well and respond positively to individual requests to discuss issues, such as student behaviour and attendance. Discussions with students indicate that most have somebody at home who checks that set homework is done. Most parents of students with special needs attend their reviews. Many parents attend and enjoy Prize Day, Years 9 and 11 presentation evenings, a wide range of performances and sports day. However, a small minority of parents do not place a high priority on their students' education. As a result, they do not deliver on their home-school agreement responsibilities to attend parents' evenings and to ensure that their children attend school.

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

67. The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The leadership group very effectively promote the aims and values of the school.
68. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. There is a clear sense of direction for the school and staff are very confident in his management abilities. He provides an excellent role model of commitment, innovation and hard work. He has been responsible for stimulating and encouraging the rich diversity that exists in the school. The headteacher has instilled an ethos of always striving to improve amongst students and staff. The school has placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning and self-review. The school is managed with thoroughness and a clear purpose to bring about success and individual fulfilment.
69. An effective senior management team very ably supports the headteacher. The team work well together and show a strong commitment to the objectives of the school. They exercise their delegated responsibilities well, conducting monitoring and review activities systematically and efficiently. Every year there is a rigorous review of performance for each subject and this leads to targets being drawn up for both the whole school and individual subjects. Each target has clear criteria so that its success or otherwise can be measured and the level of planning for meeting these targets is particularly detailed.
70. Heads of faculty and subject co-ordinators have a good awareness of their roles in monitoring standards, teaching and learning. The quality of leadership and management is particularly strong in mathematics, science, humanities, physical education, religious education, music and special educational needs. The management of design and technology, however, is unsatisfactory. In this area there is a lack of direction and evaluation of the department's work. In most subjects the monitoring of teaching focuses sharply on sharing good practice and identifying the needs for professional development. This has had a significant impact on staff awareness of their strengths and on areas for improvement. Supportive systems are in place, which enable the school to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and how to improve further.
71. Heads of year form a very effective team and play a crucial role in promoting the aims and values of the school. They are fully involved in academic and pastoral issues and act as a direct link between home and school and between the school and outside

agencies. They monitor the progress of groups of students and their subsequent levels of learning. They work closely with tutors to support and guide students' learning.

72. Developments are implemented, managed, monitored and evaluated efficiently. For example, the promotion of the Arts College has been successful as the result of the good leadership of its Director, the support of the senior management and the dedicated commitment of highly competent arts teachers. The Arts College has received two evaluation visits from consultants who have praised the delivery of the expressive and performing arts, the quality of teaching, and the motivation of the students. Consultants acknowledged the work that members of staff are doing to continue to raise standards in each of the subject areas.
73. The school improvement plan is very detailed providing a focus for strategic issues and specific objectives. These appropriately include continuing to raise standards by effective use of baseline data, maintaining the quality of teaching and learning and implementing the national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The capacity of staff to succeed in these areas of development is very good
74. The governors are very well informed about the strengths and weaknesses within the school and they are actively involved in all its facets. Governors have successfully ensured that all statutory requirements in relation to their responsibilities are met with the exception of a daily act of collective worship. Governors work closely with the headteacher and the school. They are effectively involved in the appraisal of the headteacher and the setting of performance targets. Governors appropriately monitor standards and the adequacy of curricular provision through committee structures. The documentation required for parents is in place. Governors are in a good position to make informed decisions and participate fully in the recognised priorities of the school.
75. Financial management and the planning of the use of resources are very effectively connected to the school's priorities. The school efficiently maintains a balanced budget. Although operating within tight budgetary constraints, an appropriate proportion of the school's budget is allocated to learning resources for faculties. An innovative financial model enables the cost-effectiveness of departments to be assessed. This produces vital management information to effectively evaluate accountability issues such as the performance of the modern languages department. In financial administration, there are correct divisions of responsibility and good procedures for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services purchased by the school. The last financial audit indicated minor areas for improvement in financial efficiency. These have been corrected. Specific funding for the support of students with special educational needs is used well and to good effect. Competitive tendering is used for the ordering of goods or services, and the school works hard to achieve the best value in its financial decisions. The administrative staff are highly efficient and greatly assist the smooth running of the school. All support staff are very approachable and present a professional first point of contact for the school.

76. Challenging targets for improvement are set regularly and are being met. The school's systems are not overly bureaucratic; they support the drive for raising standards. The school provides a good quality of education. A positive feature of the school is the shared commitment to improvement. The dedication of senior managers, staff and governors is a significant contributory factor to the effectiveness of the school. The school gives very good value for money, which is particularly creditable given the challenging circumstances within which it operates.
77. The staffing provision is good with well-qualified staff in nearly all faculties. However, history has only one specialist, and in modern languages German specialists teach French. Teachers are well supported by office staff, learning support assistants, and technicians in subjects such as science and information technology.
78. In-service training of staff is very well organised and is very well linked to the staff development plan. A clear system of applications is in place with a specific requirement for staff to provide a post-course evaluation. An effective system for performance management operates in the school. Induction procedures are very supportive of teachers joining the school, especially the newly qualified teachers such as in art, music and geography.
79. The provision for learning resources is good though there are some shortages of textbooks causing students to share in some classes. The level of ICT resources is good; the student to computer ratio is in line with the national average. However, technical problems, which have as yet to be resolved, have led to new laptops being infrequently used. Related problems with the school's Internet connection mean that students using computers can become frustrated waiting for the information they seek to appear on screen. Appropriate use has been made of the designated computer room by a limited range of subjects.
80. The library is an important resource and is generally well used. It opens early and remains open all day. A good number of students make use of it for research and to do their homework. However, it is insufficiently used by departments during lesson time for independent work. The library is a pleasant environment and the librarian ensures through regular events that it retains a high profile in the school as a place of enjoyment in learning. There are good links with the local branch library and this is a good source of books not otherwise available. The number of school library books on loan at any one time is relatively low and there remains a need to develop students' literacy skills by encouraging students to read more. The school makes very good use of outside resources such as museums to enrich the curriculum.
81. Accommodation at the school is generally good. The work of the school and the community benefits, for example, from the all-weather surface for physical education. The overall provision ensures that almost all subjects are now taught in satisfactory or better conditions. The provision for expressive and performing arts has some unsatisfactory elements. There are insufficient practice rooms for music and the drama studio is too small. Some rooms especially in ICT are insufficiently well ventilated in hot weather. When the post-16 building currently under construction is available, the school will be able to re-allocate the present post-16 areas to the benefit of other subjects. Many teaching areas and indeed many parts of the school are enhanced by high quality displays of students' work. This is particularly good in art rooms. The use of specialist photographic enlarging technology enables a very effective recording of students' work and involvement in lessons and in enrichment activities. These activities are well displayed in many areas around the school. The whole site is pleasant and well maintained. The benefits are already being seen as a result of a newly agreed cleaning and maintenance contract.

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

### **82. In order to raise standards the headteacher, governors and staff should:**

- Raise standards of attainment relative to national averages in tests and examinations particularly in modern languages.  
(Paragraphs: 2,3,4,5,9,10,11,12,14,95,96,98,109,110,126,131,132,166,172,181,182,198)
- Improve levels of attendance and punctuality.  
(Paragraph: 21)
- Focus on learning styles; developing students' independent learning skills.  
(Paragraphs: 2,5,31,148,162,163,168)
- Improve the application and assessment of information and communication technology in subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 29,37,79,127,130,136,144,165,169,180,183,199)
- Improve the standards of literacy and numeracy skills in subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 3,4,36,107,124)

### **Other issues for consideration:**

- Provide support to improve the management of design and technology  
( Ref. Paragraph :70)
- Devise strategies to raise girls' attainment in science (Ref. paragraph: 5)
- Give more curriculum time to modern foreign languages, science, music and drama  
(Paragraphs: 33,185)
- Use the library more during lesson time (Paragraph: 80)
- Revise IEP's to provide data on students' progress over time (Paragraph: 91)
- Improve the accommodation provision in drama and music. (Paragraphs: 81,140,154)

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

82. Overall the quality of the provision for students with special educational needs is **good**.

### Strengths

- The range of special needs being met by the successful co-ordination of different support providers
- The teamwork and shared commitment of all staff involved in special needs.
- Leadership and management promoting the school's values and clear educational direction.
- The monitoring and delivery of good teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for students both to work together on shared tasks and to take more responsibility for their own learning and achieving of targets.
- The effective collating of all available data on the background, needs, progress and support of students to provide a more useful working profile for all teachers.
- Better use of the handbook to demonstrate how school policies are reflected in special needs practice and statutory requirements are met for individual students.

83. In lessons seen during the inspection the progress made by students with special needs in Years 7 to 11 in the majority of subjects is better than expected. Their standards in science are raised from a low level on entry, and boosted significantly in Years 10 and 11. Students increase their basic skills year on year and demonstrate good subject and presentation skills in geography, particularly when they are supported or in small groups. They gain good understanding of historical ideas and apply them well in their work. Students' needs are well met because teachers are well informed about them, and learning support staff provide appropriate support based on good record keeping which they use for forward planning. Where students are given additional targets in different subjects that are based on National Curriculum standards, this influences how well they achieve. When students are withdrawn for literacy support or help with completing GCSE work during lessons their quality and standard of work improves. Students with special needs from ethnic backgrounds are well integrated and make the same progress as other students.
84. The attitudes of students with special needs are good. The students with special needs in lessons show positive attitudes to learning in Years 7 to 11. In English, grouping of students means low attaining sets are small and good use of questions provides opportunities for students to explain answers and develop confidence in speaking to adults. Students are eager to show others their work and to share their success. The relationships between students and members of the special needs team are good but are not directed sufficiently towards increasing students' independent learning skills and increasing responsibility for their own learning. The attendance of all students on the special needs register is monitored through the pastoral system, subject teachers and support workers and noted if a concern. As this does affect the achievement of some students with special needs, appropriate steps are being taken to follow this up through the education welfare officer.
85. Overall the teaching of students with special needs is good. In Years 7 to 11, in the majority of subjects students learn well, and in history learning is very good, with constant reinforcement of basic skills. Subjects generally understand how they can support students through their curriculum and through meeting different needs through a range of tasks and activities. Teaching arrangements mean students with special needs are usually taught together in lower groups with smaller numbers and by

learning support teachers. Support workers are deployed generously to help individuals or groups of students effectively, knowing when and how to offer support. There is good management of students based on teachers having a good knowledge of students' needs. Good planning identifies the special needs of students, and generally teachers match their style and method of teaching to the range of students' needs in a class. When teachers talk too much in personal and social education lessons opportunities for students to gain skills and understanding are limited. In all lessons students are clear about what they are learning, and are provided with appropriate support materials such as writing frames and individual writing boards in English. There is good use of questions, praise and reassurance and a change of activities to keep interest. Sometimes allowing students to learn from each other more would maintain the pace of learning when individuals are finding tasks difficult. The atmosphere in classrooms is focussed well on raising standards, but more attention could be given to students taking responsibility for organising their own learning. Lessons build well on each other and on homework. Staff use free lessons to review the work of other staff or of students. The special needs co-ordinator regularly takes in planners, records and students' books to promote high expectations. There are now more opportunities for students to use computers and where this is beginning to happen, it improves learning. Students with ethnic backgrounds are well integrated.

86. The special needs register and copies of students' individual education plans are issued to all staff. Students' targets are precise and helpful in identifying learning, behaviour and literacy needs, but there is a lack of numeracy targets to help learning in science. In support lessons teaching on an individual withdrawal basis is effective, and teachers relate well to the students and provide good role models. They help students to keep up, sometimes by helping them with reading, or with GCSE coursework.
87. The special needs department promotes inclusion and has established a caring ethos. The curriculum model and grouping arrangements adopted by the school provide strong support for students with special needs in small lower attainment teaching groups, where teaching is by learning support teachers in learning support rooms. By these means students are able to make good progress in lessons. However, this means a number of their lessons are not taught by subject specialist teachers, and schemes of work are often accepted as the responsibility of the learning support teachers rather than as the responsibility of the subject faculty. This arrangement also limits the opportunities for students with special needs to join in activities with students who do not have special needs, which would undermine the supported inclusion model promoted by the school. All students have equal access to the curriculum, except modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11. The withdrawal of students in Years 7 to 9 provides effective accelerated learning for literacy. Information and communication technology is available to students in the learning support suite, and for work after school. Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from an alternative curriculum which includes work placements, and vocational courses at City College and the College of Arts and Technology, and students value these and it improves attendance. As an alternative to Humanities GCSE students can gain an RSA accreditation in communication, life and work skills, involving more active learning.
88. Students are given regular opportunities to reflect on what they have learnt, and, in lessons observed, the opportunities for students to feed back on their gains in learning was impressive. The structure of lessons allowed teachers to summarise good practice at the end. This was used very well and gave students confidence to accept critical comments to improve their work. In all lessons students take their lead from the teacher and accept prompting and support. Students listen to each other well. Cultural development through learning is satisfactory but there is insufficient highlighting of the

cultural diversity of Britain, and no celebration of the cultural backgrounds of some of the students.

89. The needs of students across a range of learning, behaviour, social, medical and physical needs are understood and identified appropriately. Annual reviews for students with special needs are carried out as required. In lessons, support workers and subject teachers keep weekly records of any significant progress by students and half-termly assessment scores, to inform individual education plans and future target setting.
90. The special needs register does not contain sufficient information about the needs of students. Individual education plans do not provide profiles of students and data on progress over time to help all staff plan effectively. The distribution of all relevant data on students with special needs is necessary if results from all national and diagnostic school assessments, including reading ages, the level of need, classes and groups, background, and behaviour and attendance records, are to be a useful working profile of students for all teachers. It will also enable the special needs co-ordinator to track students' progress and achievement over time, and encourage the movement of students up and down the stages on the register of special needs. Students are not sure of their targets. Where good marking was seen in books, students change what they are doing to include improvements.
91. Leadership and management of special needs is very good. The special needs co-ordinator has been in post for just over a year, and has ensured the new code of practice is in place. Relevant information and data is being used to identify students' needs on entry, supported by LEA liaison visits to feeder schools. Monitoring of students through reviews and feedback from subjects is good. Annual reviews of students with statements of special needs are taking place in accordance with the code of practice, with the relevant adults attending with parents and students. The school has regular visits from the educational psychologist and also makes appropriate use of local authority services for specialist teaching in school, as it is designated as a full service school. The special needs team work well together, with each member of the team taking on extra responsibilities within the department. Support workers are used strategically, to reflect funding and pupil needs. The learning support rooms are an asset to the department. They are used well to support students and for lunchtime sessions for students to get help with work and to socialise. There is also a 'barrier free' room, which is effectively equipped and used to help students with physical and medical needs, and for home and hygiene courses. The school provides good access for the physically disabled students by lifts and ramps, but closed fire doors at regular intervals down the corridors are obstacles to wheelchair users, who have to rely on the co-operation of other students, which is usually forthcoming. Resources are good and students who need specialist equipment use it in lessons. There is good liaison between subjects and special needs over the purchase and selection of resources in classrooms.
92. The department supports fully the school's aims and values of developing each student's potential to the full. The handbook reflects current practice, and contains appropriate priorities. It includes copies of whole-school policies but needs to show how these are relevant and informing the provision of special needs. The department's documentation does not yet give a sufficiently transparent view of its good practice.

### **GIFTED AND TALENTED**

93. Gifted and talented students make good progress overall. The leadership and management of this recent initiative is very good, and has been given high priority by the school, with prominent displays in the library. There is monitoring and effective

record-keeping about students and planning is based on good advice and practice. All subjects identify and provide for gifted and talented students but their practice is not yet consistent. There are two cohorts of very able and able students. In some subjects students are given a distinct curriculum. In other subject lessons the top grouping of students is regarded as gifted and talented, and the most able are not appropriately challenged. In all subjects students gain in confidence, with more students being challenged, and being introduced to higher level work, underpinned by high expectations. Students in all years have been offered achievement and enrichment activities through visits, after school and Saturday activities, and taster weeks for higher education. Work in school has been stimulated by meeting poets and design professionals, and standards have improved. In mathematics enrichment material and on-line activities enable students to take their GCSE in Year 10 and to take part in European-wide mathematics challenges. In science students in Years 7 to 9 perform impressively and in Years 10 and 11, progress is very good. In geography independent working is one benefit. All gifted and talented musicians, dancers, dramatists and artists have opportunities to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities arranged through the arts school, and more students take part and improve their self-esteem as well as gain particular skills.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	33	64	41	3	0	0
Percentage	5	22	43	28	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	898
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	466

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	229
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<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	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.9
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	92	85	177

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	15	30	33
	Girls	23	33	25
	Total	38	63	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	22 (29)	36 (40)	33 (32)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (6)	13 (11)	7 (5)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	27	20
	Girls	42	26	14
	Total	69	53	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	39 (37)	30 (41)	20 (18)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	11 (6)	11 (11)	2 (4)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	82	72	154

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	23	70	77
	Girls	26	61	65
	Total	49	131	142
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	32 (17)	85 (92)	92 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30.9
	National	39.0

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	12
Indian	1
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	891
Any other minority ethnic group	7

### ***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	38	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 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

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

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	882

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	21

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000–2001
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	£
Total income	2956551
Total expenditure	2915283
Expenditure per pupil	3246
Balance brought forward from previous year	121654
Balance carried forward to next year	162922

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	24
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	25.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	898
Number of questionnaires returned	201

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	51	10	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	3	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	52	9	5	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	52	13	5	3
The teaching is good.	41	48	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	41	13	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	31	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	34	43	13	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	45	41	6	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	47	7	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	36	6	3	8

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The good teaching at both key stages which enables students to achieve well in relation to their prior learning.
- The effective implementation and interpretation of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 11.
- The good schemes of work for both key stages.
- The good use of marking and assessment procedures which allow students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and set targets for improvement.

#### Areas for improvement

- Increase the opportunities for students to develop oral skills within more structured and formal speaking activities.
- Provide opportunities for students to visit the school library within lesson time to encourage good reading habits and to improve students' reading skills.
- Provide regular opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to read and explore pre-twentieth century literature and poetry and stories from other cultures and tradition. Use these reading opportunities to provide a wider range of writing activities.
- Increase opportunities for students to use drafting and re-drafting strategies so as to raise the standard of students' written work.

94. Speaking and listening skills are below average throughout the school, although a number of high attaining students display good communication skills. Whilst students converse well with their friends within a social situation, many find it difficult to speak in anything like a formal oral activity. They find it difficult to organise their thoughts and ideas in a logical and structured manner, identify and use appropriate vocabulary, and articulate their responses in clear extended sentences. Whilst teachers use good questioning skills to extend students' oral skills, and provide them with the opportunity to discuss their work in pairs and small groups, there are very few opportunities for students to engage in whole class discussions.
95. Although many students throughout the school have satisfactory technical reading skills and can often read a range of texts with some expression and fluency, many of them lack reading comprehension skills. In contrast a number of higher attaining students display good skills and have a real understanding of the books they read. Whilst a number of students display good reading habits, many students read only at school. Students do not visit the library within lesson time and opportunities are lost for them to become regular readers. There are currently too few opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to read pre-twentieth century literature and poems and stories from other cultures and traditions. Students' attainment in reading at fourteen is below average.
96. Many of the higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 respond well to the challenging texts they read for GCSE English and English Literature. They develop satisfactory critical and analytical reading skills and use them in their reading activities. Many students in Years 10 and 11, however, often because of poor or irregular reading habits, read only at a surface level. They find it hard to appreciate the writer's use of

language to create character, setting and atmosphere, and have problems in identifying inference and subtext, those skills required to gain extra marks in final examinations. Reading skills at sixteen are below, and sometimes well below average.

97. Although many students achieve well in relation to their prior learning in their written work, standards at fourteen remain below average. Whilst higher attaining students can produce good written work with few or no mistakes, a significant number of students still find it difficult to write at length and in detail, with their work often containing a number of errors in basic English skills. The scrutiny of students' written work indicates that there are too few opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to write in an extended manner. The progress made by students with special educational needs is good.
98. The quality of written work in Years 10 and 11 is very much influenced by the amount of extra time they are willing to invest in studies outside the classroom. At their best, higher attaining students produce good quality coursework. They plan their work well, and re-draft it over time in order to improve it. As a result of this a number of students are able to develop and make a personal response to the questions they are asked. They display a good understanding of the underlying ideas in the poetry, plays and novels they read, and are able to support their answers by well-selected examples from the text supported by appropriate quotations. In contrast to this many average and lower attaining students produce only a single draft of their work, often with a lot of story telling, and fail to really explore the issues and concepts in the texts they read. Lower attaining students also find it difficult to write about the similarities and differences between different texts and genres, preferring instead to discuss each text in turn. Overall attainment in written work at sixteen is below average.
99. An important factor in students' learning and with that, their attainment, is the attitude they take towards their work. Whilst most students display positive attitudes, show interest in their lessons, and work with sustained concentration, a significant minority of students in both key stages take a passive approach to learning and make limited progress in lessons.
100. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. The department has introduced the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy in a very effective manner. Lessons are well planned with lesson objectives being shared with students. Teachers use good questioning skills to assess and extend students' understanding. Work is generally matched to the needs of students. It is within their abilities yet challenging. Timed targets usually ensure that students stay on task and that lessons are brisk and purposeful. Whilst students in Years 7 to 9 are given the opportunity to plan their written work, there are too few opportunities for students to engage in re-drafting activities. Opportunities are lost for students to improve their work by altering and improving content, style and syntax, as well as writing in a more detailed manner, and using more imaginative and descriptive language. The final part of lessons is used well to share and celebrate what students have learned and produced, and to check if the lesson objectives have been achieved.
101. Where teaching is good and better, teachers display an enthusiasm for the work in hand, and have high expectations of all students immaterial of their ability. They challenge students' initial responses, and encourage them to speak and write in more detail and at length. They also use praise to good effect to raise confidence in students' self-esteem and to develop positive attitudes towards work. All this creates a motivating and rigorous working environment where students work willingly and hard to achieve the known lesson objectives.



102. The department provides students with a good curriculum at both key stages, though there are areas for development. There are a number of extra-curricular academic clubs, with visiting poets, writers and theatre companies enriching the curriculum provided for students. The department has a good range of assessment and recording procedures and is looking towards the introduction of individual English targets. Although teachers regularly mark and correct written work, students do not correct their own errors and opportunities are lost for students to learn through their own mistakes.
103. Accommodation for the subject is good. Likewise learning resources, though the library is under-used as a resource for the development of independent skills and the promotion of reading habits. Although the department has an adequate number of appropriately qualified teachers, long-term sickness and the use of a significant number of supply teachers has impacted on continuity in students' learning.
104. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. It is well led and co-ordinated by an informed and forward-thinking manager who leads by her own excellent classroom practice. In the comparatively short time she has been in post she has already introduced a number of strategies and procedures to help raise standards of attainment. When the areas for development identified in this report are incorporated in the department development plan and embedded in practice the department will be in a stronger position to move forward.

## **Literacy**

105. All subjects have key words on display in individual classrooms, with teachers actively promoting subject specific vocabulary within lessons. This improves students' communication skills as well making textbooks more understandable. Students listen well to instructions and are encouraged to listen to the opinions of others.
106. Most subjects provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the reading of worksheets and textbooks, though as in English many students lack reading comprehension skills. In most lessons much time is spent on ensuring that students are given the opportunity to develop writing styles appropriate to the subject. Students develop satisfactory note-taking skills, engage in comprehension activities, write up the activities they are involved in; such subjects as science, and produce factual essays in appropriate subjects. Writing frames are often used to support lower attaining students in their writing activities. There are however few opportunities for students to write in an extended manner. Handwriting and presentation are generally at least satisfactory, with occasional opportunity in most subjects for students to word-process their work.
107. All of these strategies and practices develop students' understanding of the importance of literacy skills and their contribution to interpreting and communicating information. Although the provision for and the development of literacy across the curriculum is very good, students' literacy skills remain below average.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good as a result of teachers' very good subject knowledge, commitment and very good relationships that build students' confidence and encourage all to do their best.
- Very good leadership and management encourage the sharing of ideas and foster a strong desire to improve teaching and learning.
- All students' progress is carefully monitored by regular assessment.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase the involvement of students in their own assessment and marking of work in class, so allowing teachers more time to increase further the depth of their already good day-to-day marking.
- Continue to increase the CT provision for Years 10 and 11 to support learning in mathematics.
- Continue with, and develop further, the present effective strategies to raise standards.

108. For students up to the end of Year 9 the standard of work seen during the inspection was well below average. The difference between the work seen and the national test results at the end of Year 9 can be explained by improvements in teaching and learning now bearing fruit especially over the last year. The test results are virtually a year behind some developments.
109. An analysis of national test results, in conjunction with the work seen, shows that all groups of students achieve well at age 14 years. This is because of the increased emphasis on teaching and learning coupled with the adoption of the ideas behind the National Numeracy Strategy. Students, relative to their attainment level, are secure in their grasp of elementary number and algebra. The presentation of work sometimes falls below expected standards, but tends to show some improvement by the time students reach 14 years.
110. At age 14, the less able students solve problems involving the addition and subtraction of numbers using pencil and paper methods, read bar charts, and calculate simple probabilities, but they are inclined to find negative number work difficult. The more able students successfully complete number investigations involving sequences, sometimes using algebra to describe these simple sequences. These students can, however, be careless in their use of units but are able to calculate the areas and perimeters of circles. The most able employ indices to write expressions for large numbers, use simple formulas, draw and interpret statistical charts and classify the different types of triangle. Initially this group makes the odd slip when calculating the size of the slices in pie charts.
111. For students up to the end of Year 11 the standard of work seen during the inspection was below average, which is higher than the national examination results. In common with the case at the end of Year 9, this is a result of improvements in teaching and learning.
112. Statistical analysis and scrutiny of work show that achievement at age 16 is very good for all students. Many are able to combine and use the various pieces of mathematics they learnt previously. A very marked improvement in presentation is evident. At age 16, the less able use negative numbers in the context of temperature and after some initial problems substitute numbers into formulas and solve equations. They are also

able to complete a simple number investigation successfully. The more able confidently draw and interpret various statistical graphs, including, after some initial difficulties, stem and leaf graphs. They use trigonometry to calculate lengths and angles in right-angled triangles. Most algebraic errors can be attributed to the odd slip when dealing with negative quantities or in situations where fractions arise. The most able solve equations using trial and improvement, confidently describe geometrical transformations, and manipulate algebraic functions. The calculation of probabilities using tree diagrams is sometimes found difficult.

113. Students have a positive attitude to the subject, which, coupled with good quality teaching, enables them to achieve well. For example, a Year 8 lower attaining group beginning a piece of work on simplifying algebraic expressions was challenged to justify and explain the reasoning behind their working. They were keen to respond which resulted in good quality learning – students were thinking, understanding and listening to the views of others. Good relations with teachers create a good working environment in which students feel confident to voice any misunderstandings they feel. In this way their confidence is built up. This increase in confidence may account for increased levels of attainment from 14 years to 16 years. The pleasant environment in the mathematics faculty also supports the high quality of learning. Books and work on display are treated with respect.
114. A recent innovation to motivate and boost students' confidence is to give the opportunity for early entry to GCSE examination. Extra lessons and day revision sessions together with students' positive attitudes have played a key role in making this a commendable success. In the present Year 11 about 20 per cent of students already have an A\* to C grade in mathematics. Analysis suggests that another 10 per cent will be expected to gain similar grades at the end of Year 11. This represents a very creditable increase in standards. In addition to building students' confidence, early entry gives them extra time to devote to other subjects.
115. Teaching overall is good throughout ranging from satisfactory to very good. Just less than a third of lessons were very good. Very good subject knowledge, high teacher expectations and the mutual respect between teachers and students results in good quality of learning in which students achieve highly.
116. Students with special educational needs make good progress. This is because of the support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. Both are aware of their particular needs and ensure that they are given work of the appropriate challenge, as well as fostering students' independence. The situation is greatly helped by the close co-operation between teachers and learning support assistants. In two different groups of Year 7 students, in which a large number of students had special educational needs, the teacher and learning support assistant worked effectively together. By the end of the lesson all students could display, on a computer, their own results of a survey on the colours of Smarties in a packet. They were also able, on their own, to obtain a printout of these charts. Both teacher and learning support assistant were able to solve any problems that arose with the software thus preventing students becoming frustrated when problems arose. However, it was noticeable that it was a guiding principle that students were never merely 'told the answer' but were encouraged to think for themselves and supported in this. The faculty have set up a numeracy recovery programme for students identified as being two or more years behind in their mathematical attainment.
117. Those students deemed to be gifted and talented make good progress. Extension work is made available. They have participated in the Intermediate Maths Challenge and a

team will enter the Junior Maths Challenge. After school sessions are run to support students in developing higher level thinking skills. Two students have competed in the European Kangaroo Mathematical Challenge.

118. Standards of numeracy are below average. Successful numeracy summer schools have been run for the last three years. A large proportion of students have a satisfactory recall of basic number facts, including the multiplication tables and are able to perform pencil and paper calculations, but finger counting is not unknown in some of the lowest attaining groups. The National Numeracy Strategy has improved the situation. It has been fully adopted in Years 7 and 8. Some of the relevant and useful features have been adapted for use in other years. Members of the mathematics faculty have attended National Numeracy Strategy courses and observed primary school colleagues teach. The faculty is well resourced to teach the National Numeracy Strategy.
119. The use of ICT is better than at the time of the last inspection. For example, students use the chart drawing facilities of spreadsheets to quickly produce and discuss the suitability of various graphs. Also lists of relevant websites are sometimes given for students to investigate and graphing software is used to investigate various graphs. Useful software packages have been purchased; teachers share their experiences of this in order to use them effectively and efficiently. A special calculator attachment for an overhead projector was used to great effect, enabling students to show the rest of the group various ways to enter complex calculations. The staff faculty computer is well used to produce high quality resources such as worksheets, which has a positive effect on learning.
120. There is a sensible well thought-out departmental literacy policy and teachers make a point of insisting on the use of correct mathematical language. New mathematical vocabulary such as 'origin', 'expression' and so on is written on the board and students' attention drawn to it. There are also opportunities to 'write-up' the results of numerical and statistical investigations. Writing frames are sometimes used to support students' writing, for example, to describe a piece of mathematics software and to briefly summarise what they learnt by using it. Students are often asked to explain, in front of the class, how they arrive at their answers. This helps build up their speaking skills as well as developing their mathematical understanding.
121. Leadership and management are very good with a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve. For example, the adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy for up to 14-year-olds has been carefully thought through and analysed to take account of the particular needs of students at the school. The management style is democratic and staff are given every opportunity to develop their teaching skills. Knowledge and understanding of curricular and examination requirements are very good. Students' progress is carefully monitored by regular assessment. The commitment to raise standards is very high within the faculty. This is a very hard working faculty. Staff give freely of their time after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays.
122. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There have been improvements in teaching, a better match of work to all students' attainment levels and a greater pace in lessons. There is now an increased emphasis on the formal monitoring of teaching and learning. The sharing of good practice has become more prevalent. There are now more efficient systems of assessment in place; annually set National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades are used to track individuals' progress.

## **Numeracy**

123. The standard of numeracy in the school is below average. The numeracy skills acquired in mathematics usually support students' progress in other subjects. However, there is some evidence that levels of numeracy skills can sometimes impede progress in a small number of subjects. In science, for example, some students in a higher attaining Year 11 group experienced difficulties manipulating formulas; some lower attaining Year 10 students found difficulty balancing chemical equations – a result of having poor recall of basic number facts. There is further evidence of this in students' overuse and sometimes inappropriate use of calculators. In a Year 9 personal, social and health education lesson about banking and credit, several lower attaining students were unable to perform calculations involving percentages. Nevertheless, the fact that most instances of poor numeracy tend to involve older students suggests that the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive effect lower down the school.
124. Students in all year groups have the opportunity to apply their numeracy skills. In history and geography, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 interpret information presented in graphs and tables. In a Year 9 history lesson, students with special educational needs were given a specially designed worksheet to enable them to deal successfully with large numbers. The worksheet also helped students to interpret and explain relationships when they transferred this information onto bar charts. Students in art use and develop their knowledge about pattern and shape. In science, students of all levels of attainment interpret a wide variety of scales, tables, charts and diagrams. Scale drawings, judgements about relative size and proportion are encountered in design and technology.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Students' achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11, is good and improving.
- Good teaching, with particular strengths in the management and expectations of the students, the quality and use of assessment and subject knowledge and understanding.
- Provision for, and progress made by, gifted and talented students.
- Leadership and management of the department which are closely aligned with the aims and values of the school.
- The quality of technical support is high.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough largely because students' attainment in aspects of literacy and numeracy are below average.
- The performance of girls at GCSE.
- Students' presentation of diagrams, graphs and observational drawings.
- The use of information and communication technology.
- Low curriculum time allocation in Year 10 and Year 11.

125. Standards on entry to the school are well below national expectations. However, these standards are improving and this is shown by Year 7 students' achievement in lessons and tests. For instance, lower-attaining students, who knew electrical symbols for components and could competently and correctly assemble simple circuits, compelled the teacher to quickly adjust the lesson plan. Good teaching and the effective use of regular assessment information are used successfully to help students, including those

with special educational needs, to make good progress between Years 7 and 9 and they achieve much better than expected. Most students with regular attendance make very good progress in Years 10 and 11, in particular those students identified as gifted and talented in science. Students' good behaviour and attention in lessons helps their achievement in science, especially in Years 10 and 11. Overall, students' achievement is good. However, their attainment is well below average because of the weak skills of most students in the uses of literacy and numeracy, despite the close attention given by the teachers. These weaknesses restrict the use of their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, particularly when committing them to paper or making simple calculations. For example, GNVQ students in Year 10 understood clearly the ideas associated with theoretical and actual yields when extracting copper metal from an ore, but they experienced difficulties when calculating the results because their use of fractions and decimals was insecure.

126. Students' practical skills continue to be good as reported at the last inspection. Students use equipment and materials safely, respectfully, competently and sensibly. Investigatory work is supported by efficient and effective technical assistance. Year 7 students, including those who are lower-attaining and those with learning difficulties, have a sound understanding of 'fair-testing' when discussing how to plan an experiment. By Year 9, most students identify variables and suggest ways in which they can be controlled to study the effects. In an excellent lesson for lower-attaining students in Year 9, including a few with special educational needs, skilful teaching enabled students to identify all the variables which could have an effect when dilute acids are added to different metals. Using previous knowledge of the reactivity of different metals, students deduced the possible outcomes before carrying out the investigation successfully. Analysis of students' work shows balanced coverage of all strands of scientific content with a good level of achievement. However, insufficient use of ICT as reported at the last inspection means that opportunities are missed to raise students' achievement. Students' recording and presentation of work overall is satisfactory except for the standards shown in accurately labelling and drawing neatly apparatus diagrams, observational sketches and line graphs.
127. Teaching is good overall. Lessons observed were never less than satisfactory and some were excellent. Lesson objectives and new technical vocabulary to be learned are shared with the class and recorded by the students as a preliminary to each lesson. This effective procedure provides a clear focus for the teacher and a constant reminder of expectations to the student. Teachers have a very good command of the knowledge and understanding of the subject content which they use very effectively when asking questions, following up responses and challenging students to develop their thinking skills. Students are well managed and sensitively controlled. Expectations are high. The monitoring of students' progress, as seen in the supportive marking of work and frequent testing, is used effectively by the teachers to set departmental and individual targets. The positive attitudes of most students towards learning, especially those in Years 10 and 11, are significant factors in allowing teachers to use a wide range of effective skills and methods. Students' long-term retention of work is better than the retention from lesson to lesson. This weakness affects the pace of working and compels teachers not to assume assimilation without checking by regular revision and recapitulation at the beginning of each lesson. The teaching is adjusted very well to the needs of the students. For example, higher-attaining Year 11 students finding difficulties in transposing the formula for the relationship between velocity, time and distance were helped successfully by the use of a relevant and appropriate aide-memoire.
128. Leadership of the department is very good. Staff morale is high and close teamwork prevails. There is a strong commitment to improve and succeed. The daily work of the

department matches very closely the ethos and values seen in the school. Areas for future development are appropriately identified, prioritised, costed and timed. However, insufficient attention has been given to the development of the subject over the next few years in Years 10 and 11 and, as reported at the time of the last inspection, the low curriculum time allocated in these years. The management of the subject is very good. Teachers have well defined responsibilities and the new and younger teachers are well supported. The work of the department is efficiently monitored in areas such as marking of students' work, setting of homework, and tracking students' progress and setting targets. The department is less successful in monitoring the use and range of opportunities to improve students' learning through all aspects of information and communication technology, although teachers make very good use of the technology to monitor students' subject performance. The monitoring of teaching has recently been established and is at a formative stage of development. Liaison with contributory primary schools is satisfactory; however, with improving standards on entry, stronger links will provide for better curriculum coherence. Resources for learning are good overall.

129. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. Identified strengths have been maintained or improved. Some areas for improvement remain, for example, very low standards in tests and examinations, low curriculum time in Years 10 and 11 and the use of information and communication technology. Provision of booster classes, Saturday morning school and after school classes are providing more opportunities for students, particularly those identified as gifted and talented, to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Entries for the single science award have declined rapidly since the last inspection in favour of the double science award. Curriculum changes introduced in 2001 mean that from 2003 some students will be assessed for GNVQ Foundation science qualifications. The department hopes that this change will prove more relevant for the students' needs and raise their attainment.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Work in food technology and graphics products.
- Improved GCSE results from 2000.
- Relationships in the faculty.
- Good practical work.
- Good and effective teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the management of the faculty by more effective and consistent monitoring.
- Use data to track progress within each specialism.
- Extend the use of CAD/CAM in students' experience.
- Continue to develop graphical and evaluation skills.

130. Standards of work in Year 9 are well below the national average overall. Achievement is satisfactory overall. When prior attainment is considered progress can be good. Practical work is usually good. The better design folders are neatly presented across a range of material areas. Some imaginative ideas and good dimensioned drawings in a graphics project in Year 9 and good use of colour and ICT to illustrate results of questionnaires were seen in a number of modules of work. There is good use of models to support design ideas and good investigation of shape, colour and materials.

Where the work is weaker, it is usually untidy or incomplete. Colour work is sometimes completed using felt-tip pens and research ideas are not developed. Some students' work reflects poor line quality, being finished in biro. A minority of students have difficulty in recalling work done and naming equipment or materials correctly.

131. Standards of work of present Year 11 are below the national average in most specialisms. Good research and development in a packaging project in graphics and good use of information and communication technology, colour and photographs in a food technology project investigating in-flight meals is seen. In textiles, good depth of research is seen in a project looking at 1960s fashion showing appreciation of appliqué and embroidery techniques. Weaker work is associated with a limited range of research ideas, weak evaluations or where work is incomplete. Poor attendance by some students affects progress and standard of work achieved. Girls usually perform better than boys particularly in the presentation of design folders. Achievement is satisfactory and often good and the subject compares favourably with other subjects in the school. Practical work, including modelling, is usually of a good standard. All students including those with educational or behavioural difficulties make satisfactory progress overall; students make good progress in practical work. All students integrate well in the faculty. Standard of work in child development is below the national average although achievement is satisfactory. Most students contribute positively to the lesson.
132. Student attitudes are usually good or very good. Students work well in all lessons and respond well when suitably challenged. They settle to tasks quickly which enables the teacher to begin lessons in a constructive way and share lesson objectives with the students. Students work well in pairs or groups. There are some instances of inattention particularly during teacher explanations or demonstrations.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the better lessons learning is accelerated and students make good progress, for example, in a Year 8 lesson where students looked at nutritional values in food products. In a Year 9 lesson considerable increases in learning technical language were seen as students developed skills in adapting recipes. These lessons had good pace, made good use of time and resources, had appropriate teacher intervention and good student management. Some other lessons, although satisfactory, can lack real challenge and pace: students are unsure of materials and processes learned or where students are off task. Most lessons have a good mix of activities helping with student motivation and interest. All staff give generously of their time after school to help students with their work.
134. The head of faculty has addressed a number of issues since the last inspection and has introduced GNVQ manufacturing in Year 10. Aspects of leadership and management are, however, unsatisfactory. Priorities for improving standards and moving the faculty forward need to be more firmly established. Monitoring student progress and teaching and learning needs a sharper focus across all areas of the faculty. More effective use of data should be part of tracking performance in each specialism and setting realistic targets. In the curriculum, metal as a material is not currently used and graphical skills are under-developed in a number of areas. The use of CAD/CAM does not feature prominently in students' work at present. Literacy development is good and all lessons use key words to increase technical language. Numeracy and ICT skills are satisfactory. The accommodation is good overall and there are good displays of work in all areas to support the learning. Part-time technicians give invaluable support to the faculty.
135. Since the previous inspection, there is more stability in staffing in the faculty. Progress is good in most lessons, marking is now linked to National Curriculum levels and there



is good student response in all areas. There are some CAD/CAM facilities, but these are still in need of improving as are the development of evaluation skills. There is some improvement in providing work for different attainment levels but this also needs further development.

## **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND PERFORMING ARTS**

136. Very full documentation has been produced to ensure that there is a common delivery of the four component subjects – art, dance, drama, and music. Common aspects include teaching methodology, methods of assessment, information concerning levels of attainment which are understood by the students, the implementation of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, rewards and sanctions, homework policies, and the provision for students with special education needs and those who are gifted and talented. These common policies are reviewed annually, and contribute positively to the cohesive way in which the arts are delivered.
137. Standards of attainment are overall in line with the national average, with notably good examination results in drama and art. Members of staff in each subject area continue to work hard to raise standards of attainment. The overall quality of teaching in music, art, dance and drama is good in Years 7 to 9 and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Students have good attitudes to the arts, and overall make good progress by the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11.
138. During the inspection, the significant impact the creation of the Arts College has already had in eighteen months is apparent. Members of staff, parents and students are very positive about what an immersion into the arts forms is having. Students display growing self-confidence and self-esteem, and many are overcoming the social and inter-personal difficulties they may have had. The school is developing a culture in which it is acceptable to participate in an art form. Boys, for example, who previously may have been truants, will turn up to attend a break dance lesson. Students relate very well to the arts teachers, and to each other.
139. The Director of the Arts College, with the headteacher, the governors and members of the Arts College staff, have established the correct priorities for its direction, have managed the finances and resources appropriately, and are ensuring that the College gives very good value to the school and local community. The accommodation, however, has unsatisfactory features, especially for an Arts College. There are insufficient music practice rooms, and the drama studio is unsuitable in a number of ways. While the new, purpose-built dance studio is an excellent resource, the changing rooms for dance are a considerable distance away, often resulting in up to fifteen minutes of a lesson being lost. Many of the class sizes are far too big for practical work, affecting students' achievement and attainment, and putting considerable stress on the teachers.

## ART

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

### Strengths

- Relationships in the department.
- Standards in GCSE examinations.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Excellent display in the department, across the school and in various outside venues to celebrate and inspire.

### Areas for development

- Strategies to raise attainment and achievement at GCSE and to increase the proportion of A and A\* grades.
- Greater consistency in the use of ICT.
- Programme of gallery visits which would support an increase in standards and act as inspiration.

140. Art plays a significant role in underpinning achievement and success in the school. Although students enter the school with attainment well below the national average, work seen by both the end of Year 9 and in Year 11 is at the national average. Art has thus a significant impact on raising attainment and achievement, and on improving student self-esteem. Students with special educational needs attain at least as well as their peers but, although the proportion attaining grade C and above has improved, attainment at the highest grades is not evident. Sketchbooks are used well as tools for development. Students in Year 7 understood and used warm and cool colours appropriately, and those in Year 8 were using African style patterns and textures well, showing imitation, reflection, inversion and symmetry in the design of their large-scale patterns. A good range of visual and tactile textures was seen from Year 9 students in their two and three-dimensional work. One girl in a Year 10 class had a portfolio showing a wide range of good quality work, and a boy with special educational needs had a very clear image in his head of where his large-scale relief work in a pop art style was going. Students in the Year 11 GCSE group had produced some exciting large-scale three-dimensional work in a range of styles based on effective research and development work.
141. Teaching and learning are both good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching is characterised by excellent relationships, where student strengths and weaknesses are well known. Planning and preparation are very good. Targets are set and shared in all lessons; work is placed in context, and targets are later refined. Management and organisation are very good – especially with the more challenging students in Year 7-and students pay close attention and try very hard. Local authority arts initiatives are very well used in the department for both content and motivation. Students learn by research and development, observation and analysis, trial and error, selection and rejection, skill development, links to mainstream art from a variety of historical and world sources, and above all by doing and by refining their skills and work in progress. Display is very well used to both celebrate attainment and inspire others.
142. Student response is good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Although a significant minority, particularly in the lower school, is restless and immature, generally students respond very well. They are open and positive, and listen intently. Behaviour is responsible, and students concentrate well. The very supportive attitude of students to others with physical disabilities was clearly shown in a Year 11 GCSE

class. The ability of students to manage their own learning improves as they approach Years 10 and 11, with teacher reassurance needed less frequently. Overall student attitudes support a very good working atmosphere in lessons.

143. The curriculum is exciting and creative, as well as being broad and balanced, and the multicultural nature of our society is fully reflected in the curriculum. The curriculum and the teaching and learning styles associated with it fully support access for all students. ICT is adequate, but the eight new machines with appropriate software already on order will harness the staff expertise effectively, and improve this aspect of the curriculum. There is no programme of gallery visits. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is unusually broad, and students can take four different art-based subjects; photography was introduced last year. Leadership and management are good, and a collaborative style encourages mutual ownership by all involved. Teaching and learning are efficiently monitored through the school's performance management system, but the department should disseminate best practice between colleagues more effectively. There is a good assessment system, including effective student self-assessment. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are well supported by the art department, and much of its work shows real inspiration.
144. Almost all the issues in art since the last inspection have been addressed; examination results are still the best in the school, and the department's view that this year's entry will return to the standard of the 2000 group, which was at the national average, is well founded. The attainment of the most able still needs further attention, with few students attaining the highest grades.

## **DANCE**

145. Overall, the quality of provision in dance is very good. A specialist teacher was appointed at the beginning of the year, and she is already making a significant impact upon the raising of the status of dance in the school. A member of the physical education department also teaches some dance. The subject is taught discretely on a rota in Years 7 and 8, and through one lesson a week in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, it is taught both as a discrete subject and as an expressive art. The quality of teaching is overall good in Years 7 to 9, and is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers demonstrate a firm but friendly approach to students, and choose themes and music for lessons, which have considerable attraction to them. They have high expectations of what will be achieved. Students make good progress in lessons, and both male and female students have good attitudes towards dance. Although they are only in their first year of receiving specialist dance tuition, students are on target to gain good standards by the end of Year 9, and to gain standards in line with the national average by the end of Year 11. Students are already beginning to develop good body co-ordination, are becoming more spatially aware, and are starting to develop creative ideas for improvisation. Full policy statements have been produced for delivery of the subject, and development plans for taking the department forward. The department operates effectively within the Arts College, and contributes significantly to the extra-curricular provision.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- The good teaching which enable students to develop a range of drama strategies and techniques and use them in their work.
- The scheme of work at both key stages.
- The development of students' communication skills, and the contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure continuity in the subject by providing all students in Years 7 to 9 with a drama period each week.
- Provide accommodation which is more in keeping with the requirements of the subject.

146. In the Years 8 and 9 lessons students were involved in an imaginative piece of issue-based drama. They explored the life of a young West African trader and his trip to the supposed good life in Paris. During these two lessons students displayed an effective understanding of simple drama techniques and strategies, including freeze frame, thought tracking and hot-seating, and were able to use them in their work. Students worked well together in both pairs and small groups as they gave shape to their work. They listened to and valued each other's ideas and opinions, and refined and improved their work through repetition and rehearsal. Students were aware of those factors needed for the creation of believable characters, facial appearance, gesture, body movement and motivation, and worked well together in creating and sustaining a role. A small minority of students lacked self-discipline and control, and failed to stay in role. Students were eager to share their work with the rest of the class and demonstrated a clear sense of audience. They were aware of the sensitivity of others and made constructive comments about each other's work and how it might be improved.
147. Students taking GCSE drama were seen to be engaged in some imaginative and challenging drama work as they used a song by Tracy Chapman as stimulus for their work on relationships. Students in one higher attaining group worked in a positive and confident manner in linking together a number of freeze frames with contrasting thought tracking activities. Students applied themselves well to the activities they were involved in, with one demonstrating obvious improvement in work over time. In contrast to this a lower attaining group of students involved in a similar activity lacked real commitment to their work, and made limited progress in the time available. They lacked the confidence and ability to explore the stimulus in any real depth and found it hard to explore emotions and feelings.
148. As part of their GCSE studies students are expected to produce a number of written pieces of work, evaluating their own improvisations and performances and reviewing a theatrical performance that they have seen. These activities are very much influenced by students' below average literacy skills, with written work being somewhat brief. Whilst students are able to write about the content of the activities they were involved in, they are less secure in their ability to make constructive comments about their own skills and the final performance. Likewise, whilst students have a clear understanding of those factors which contribute to a theatrical performance - use of lighting, sound and properties - they are less able to evaluate their contribution to and their impact on the performance as a whole.

149. The majority of students approach their work in a positive manner and work with sustained interest. This impacts on the quality of learning taking place in lessons. Occasionally a minority of students takes a passive approach to their lessons and makes limited progress in the time available.
150. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students in a meaningful and challenging manner. Objectives for lessons are shared with students, with good well-sequenced activities enabling students to make progress in their learning by using a range of drama skills in more complex and demanding situations. Teachers put their own good acting skills to good effect as they engage in teacher-in-role activities which provide students with a clear understanding of the framework for their activities. The final part of lessons is used well with students being given the opportunity to show their work to the rest of the class, and checking to see if the objectives for the lesson have been achieved.
151. Leadership and management of the subject are good, with a new member of staff taking control of the subject two weeks prior to the inspection. Staff work well together, they have a real commitment to raising standards in the subject, and promoting drama both as a discrete subject and as part of the Expressive Arts faculty. Teachers regularly assess students' work each half-term using drama-specific criteria.
152. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, with the department providing a drama club for each key stage. There are also opportunities for students to take part in regular school productions. These are much valued by students, parents and the school.
153. Resources for the subject are adequate, though accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. The converted classroom used as a drama studio is somewhat limited in size, has poor blackout facilities and no lighting. With its focus on regular opportunities for students to work in a collaborative manner on a range of contemporary issues the department makes a valuable contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management, enabling the music department to take an active role in the Arts College development.
- Very good teaching, contributing towards the raising of standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Excellent extra-curriculum provision.
- Very good contribution to students' spiritual, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising of standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision of more time in Years 7 to 9, to further develop the teaching of different forms of notation and musical literacy, and contribute towards the raising of standards.
- Further develop the use of information and communication technology, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

154. By the age of 14, students demonstrate good aural awareness, and successfully analyse music they listen to. During the inspection, the department was preparing to participate in a large Manchester Arts in Education Festival, and the focus of lessons was upon the music of Africa. Students had a thorough knowledge of the elements of vocal and instrumental African music. They could identify form and orchestration, and could clearly explain how original African music is different from westernised African music, as in Paul Simon's compositions. Students have a good sense of rhythm, as exemplified by the Year 9 class in which they competently performed quite difficult syncopated rhythms in three parts. The quality of singing of African songs, particularly by the boys, is impressive, being clear, accurate and confident.
155. Students in Year 10 have satisfactory standards of attainment, as shown in the discrete music lesson observed during the inspection. They have a good knowledge of how to use music technology effectively for composition. Students can, for example, build in advanced rhythm and pitch sequences on which they successfully add melodies. In the Year 11 class observed, the students were preparing for an expressive arts examination in which they are not required to have such advanced musical skills as those taking a discrete music course. Their standards of composition were very elementary, but the quality of poetry and prose to link with their composition was of a high order, being imaginative and perceptive. This was an appropriate course for those particular students.
156. Students of all ability make good progress across the school; although there is currently insufficient time allocated to music in Years 7 to 9. This results in forms of musical notation not being revisited and developed on a regular basis. However, students are enabled to appraise, create and perform music in ways which give them immediate success, largely through the development of their aural awareness. This gives them instant satisfaction, and they make clear progress. The very careful preparation and structure of lessons contribute to students making good progress, as do the students' good attitudes. They remember what they have covered in previous lessons, and can develop from the skills and knowledge they have already gained. A student with special educational needs was observed and had made obvious progress over time, and also within the lesson. The work involved composing an effective sequence of chords on a computer with the help of a member of the support staff.
157. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very well prepared, with stimulating resources being prepared in advance, which raise and maintain the interest of the students. Lessons are appropriately varied, with a successful balance between theory and practice. They are always brought to neat endings, usually with a short recapitulation. Teachers have secure specialist knowledge. They make the subject interesting by choosing attractive project themes, which encourage students to enjoy their music making. Students, for example, greatly enjoy using the steel pans, which develop their sense of rhythm and chord formation. There is always a high degree of challenge in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teachers use appropriate software to help students compose with the music technology.
158. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The whole ethos of music in the school has significantly improved, largely due to the school becoming an Arts College. Standards of attainment have been raised in Years 7 to 9. There has recently been a huge uptake on GCSE courses. Parents are now much more involved with music activities.
159. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of how the development of music fits into the ethos of

the Arts College. Although there is insufficient time allocation to revisit certain aspects of delivering the music curriculum in Years 7 to 9, her philosophy for delivering music is appropriate for these students at the present time, and with the type of courses presented. She enables students to appraise, compose and perform successfully. There will be a full allocation of time as from next term, and this should continue to raise standards in these years.

160. The department contributes significantly to students' spiritual, social and cultural development, both within the curriculum, and through extra-curriculum opportunities. The range and quality of extra-curriculum provision is quite exceptional, and contributes very much towards giving additional experiences to the talented students in the school. During the inspection, the noise from a steel pan session, led by a visiting teacher, filled the school with 'sunny optimism' and the performance of "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba", performed by a very young group of string and woodwind players, was of a very high order of competence. Many of the class sizes are far too large for practical music making in Years 7 to 9.

## HUMANITIES

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

### Strengths

- Good level of achievement at GCSE.
- Very good relationships with students, leading to the establishment of a very good atmosphere for learning.
- The contribution of the humanities department at GCSE to the wider education of the students, that is their spiritual, moral and social development, their citizenship, and their standards of literacy and numeracy.
- The rigour of the system of assessment, and the use of assessment to help students to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- Progression in students' ability to research and to structure their writing independently.
- Strategies to raise attainment of the most able students.
- Increase in use of information and communication technology by all classes to promote learning.

161. Year 11 students' work seen during the inspection was slightly below national expectation. The majority of students perform well in relation to their ability but the most able do not produce the highest levels of independent thinking. Almost all students are willing to put themselves in the place of other people whose situations they study. Average and more able students can give good examples to support their argument, for example in their studies of the problems of homelessness and prejudice. When examining the impact of historical events, in particular in their study of the Holocaust, students can see the impact of the political system in Germany in the 1920s to 1930s on the behaviour of the Nazis in turning the Jews into scapegoats. They can give relevant spoken answers to teachers' questions, and with guidance can write accurately about cause and effect. Students with special educational needs can use their own experience to help them to understand how people learn attitudes and behaviour. However, all students are very dependent on the teachers' guidance in the form of leading questions and writing frames, almost up to the time of the examination in Year 11.

162. The good achievement of students in humanities is the result of good teaching by the entire department. In all classes the teachers promote good relationships with students, giving them an environment in which they can learn well. Teachers expect students to work hard, but maintain their level of interest by using a variety of stimulating approaches, which included sharing personal experiences, role-play, comment on source materials and poster design during the week of the inspection. Staff set a challenging pace but give students helpful support through leading questions and different forms of writing frames to make sure that their work is to the point of the question. They draw in the students who are not volunteering answers, encouraging them to think about the issues. Because all students feel that their responses are of value they are confident in offering their views and supporting them from the evidence. Staff are particularly successful in their use of personal experiences to help students with special educational needs to understand issues. Although they have given students opportunities to work independently in some of their coursework, they are not actively teaching more able students to work without the supports that they offer to the others, and so are not making it possible for them to work at the highest levels. Teachers have very good knowledge of their students' individual learning needs because of their thorough assessment of the work. Because they discuss their findings with the students, they all know their strengths and how they can improve on their weaknesses.
163. The humanities curriculum meets the needs of the students very well. It is designed in modules to provide short units on different topics that keep levels of interest high. Although the modular examination course has been discontinued, the staff have found it so successful that they are continuing to structure the new Year 10 course in the same way. Thus Year 10 students are enjoying the course as much as Year 11. The real strength of the course is its contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, with concentration on the impact of human experience on behaviour and attitudes. The individual subjects that are usually studied at GCSE are studied at lower levels than in history, geography and sociology courses. History is well served in that most of the examples used are historical rather than geographical or sociological. Therefore the students experience no physical geography and no examples of sociological studies, but they benefit from the opportunities to think about and discuss the issues within the course.
164. Throughout the humanities course in Years 10 and 11, teachers make a good contribution to the development of students' basic skills of literacy and numeracy. This is shown by a concentration on oral and written explanation and analysis of written, visual and statistical evidence. They also make sure that students always understand the key terms that they need in any lesson. The department's contribution to ICT is variable because it is not possible for all classes to book time in computer rooms, but the department provides humanities contexts used by the ICT department in their lessons. The quality of leadership and management in humanities is very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.



## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography in Years 7 to 9 is **good**. Geography is not taught as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11; Aspects of geography appear in the humanities course.

### Strengths

- Teaching of basic skills.
- Teaching of geographic skills.
- Regular assessment of students to National Curriculum levels.
- Contribution to the teaching of moral and social education and citizenship.

### Areas for development

- Ensure consistency in the assessment of class work and homework.
- Ensure consistency in teachers' expectations of students to develop self-confidence and the skills of learning independently.
- Ensure consistency in the use of enquiry methods in geography teaching.

165. The work seen during the inspection confirms that students make good progress from entry to the school. By the end of Year 9 standards of attainment in lessons are below average. However, students do develop the skills of presentation using geographical conventions. They can use geographical vocabulary correctly, for example, in describing differences between more or less developed countries. Higher attaining students can explain how an interaction between human and physical processes can lead to different patterns on a local, national or global scale. Students with special educational needs also make good progress in their geographical knowledge, skills and presentation of their work. They also describe and begin to explain geographical processes.
166. Teaching is good overall; some is very good and some excellent. Where teaching is good, teachers use their good subject knowledge and good knowledge of their students to structure interesting lessons that involve the students and take account of individual learning needs and targets. Students' work is assessed regularly and class work and homework is often assessed to National Curriculum levels, in line with, and therefore in preparation for, the regular level assessments that are used to inform students and parents of progress. Students are involved in the assessment and reporting in that they record what they have achieved and what they must do to improve. Teachers make good use of assertive discipline techniques to ensure their students remain on task and contribute to lessons.
167. In the very good lessons the enthusiasm of the teacher is contagious and students enjoy the work, for example in a Year 8 lesson about the development of waterfalls in river valleys. Where teaching is excellent, teachers also encourage extended writing and use strategies to develop students' skills of working independently. In particular they make good use of enquiry methods, for example, for a study of life in a less economically developed country students were asked to extract information relating to a given definition of poverty from photographs and determine the cause and effect of poverty. They then gave an explanation of processes observed, thereby giving them ownership of the ideas and hypotheses developed. In lessons where teaching was only satisfactory teachers did not give students the opportunity to work independently. Students respond well to challenging work in lessons and there are good relationships between students and with teachers in geography classrooms. These good relationships help generate a good working and learning environment.

168. The subject is well led and managed. It is part of the Humanities faculty. Subject specialists who have good subject knowledge teach the subject. There are regular meetings, but informal daily contact is an important part of the management style. Teaching is monitored formally and regularly as part of performance management. Accommodation is adequate. Keywords for the lesson are displayed on the board. National Curriculum level descriptors, transcribed into language the students understand, are displayed and referred to in lessons. Text resources are barely adequate, but are more than adequately supplemented by teacher knowledge and teacher-produced resources. The use of ICT is increasing as teacher confidence grows with their attendance on the New Opportunities Fund course.
169. The subject makes a valuable contribution to students' moral and social education through consideration of development issues in studies of more economically developed and less economically developed countries, and through students' field study visits. In studies of other countries, geography contributes to cultural education.
170. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. This is seen in the achievement of students measured against their prior attainment. Students with special educational needs also now make good progress.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Very good relationships with students promoting good learning.
- Use of assessment to help students improve.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities, especially visitors to the school and visits to historical sites.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop strategies to identify and challenge the most able students.
- Use of ICT with all groups as required in the National Curriculum for history.

171. Overall, attainment in lessons is below average. By Year 9 the majority of students can give examples of historical causes, for example, in the events that led to the outbreak of the First World War. The most able can show how such causes are linked to develop the situation, but there is little evidence of students emphasising the most important causes. In their personal studies at the end of Years 8 and 9 students can find out about aspects of slavery and the First World War, and can express their findings as description or narrative but even the most able do not raise important focal issues. They present their work well, using a wide range of sources including library books, CD-ROM and Internet. Students with special educational needs work at high levels of achievement, for example, when they draw and interpret graphs of wartime involvement and casualties in order to answer set questions about the impact of war on different nations. When they enter the school students give only very brief answers. By the end of Year 9 they can, with the help of writing frames, write relevant longer descriptions and explanations.
172. Although the majority of teachers of history are non-specialists, they work together very well to prepare and teach courses and lessons that help the students to make this good progress. The department provides a wide range of visits to historical sites and invites both oral witnesses and historical performers to bring the subject alive. In normal lessons there is a wide range of activities to maintain students' interest and

concentration. Teachers support students' learning very well by making sure that all take part, asking questions that they are able to answer to lead them towards discovery of new ideas. Students know how what they are studying is relevant to the course, and as a result of a very efficient system of assessment know how to tackle their areas of weakness. The department runs a support club after school to help students who are having problems at any level of the course. This level of support contrasts with the freedom given in the two independent studies in Years 8 and 9, so that students are not fully prepared for the difference between the two approaches and need more gradual development of self-organisation.

173. In every way the department has improved since the last inspection, working effectively together under very good leadership to improve the planning, teaching and assessment of the students' work, with a resulting improvement in standards.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The provision of dedicated information technology courses for all students.
- The number of computers in the school.
- The introduction of a GNVQ course in information technology.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The organisation of folders, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Cross-curricular ICT, in particular the development of a whole-school scheme of work.
- The training of subject teachers in ICT.

174. Students aged 11-14 experience a full ICT course with an hour a week teaching time. The course covers the main areas of National Curriculum ICT and provides a suitable level of challenge. Over the three years students acquire a range of basic skills in industry standard software. They apply these in a range of contexts. In Year 7 for example they are using presentational software to communicate to others information about their hobbies and interests. They are able to source and to combine various pieces of information including sound in order to present information. However, standards are overall below national expectations. Few students have developed a sense of audience, and presentations, though technically sound, are largely a collection of arbitrarily chosen images and words.
175. The standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Students build on the basic skills they acquire earlier in the school using a suitable range of software. They are entered for two examination courses, GNVQ and Short Course GCSE. Students work on projects that simulate real life situations. In GNVQ students develop an understanding of users' needs. They produce descriptions of the solutions they propose to users' problems. These and their evaluations are mostly limited and do not cover a sufficiently wide range of considerations. Students have an adequate knowledge of the main components of computer systems. GCSE Short Course students have a basic knowledge of aspects of the course such as data logging. They have a very basic grasp of simple programming languages used in control technology.
176. Teaching is mostly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers' planning of lessons is satisfactory though it lacks the inclusion of topical detail and the input of interesting

developments in ICT to grab students' interest. There is some unsatisfactory teaching that happens when teachers fail to settle students down at the start of the lesson and are not able to seize and sustain their interest. In all lessons teachers share lesson objectives with students to give them a clear idea of what is required. This gives direction to learning. Subject knowledge is satisfactory and teachers give sound feedback to students, moving around rooms to promote individual progress in learning. Homework is regularly set and this contributes well to students' learning.

177. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers begin lessons appropriately setting out lesson objectives and recapping earlier activity so that students are clear about the course of their learning. Teachers produce guidance sheets that outline what students should do to achieve the various grades offered by the examination board. These are not all in language that is fully accessible to all students. Teachers need to simplify the sheets so that all students understand them. This approach will help develop independent learning habits. Planning of the examination courses is appropriate. The folders of all students, but especially those in Years 7 to 9, are not well organised and so do not give a good picture of progress. The department has recognised the need to develop a more systematic approach to the recording of work that at the same time offers a body of relevant knowledge for revision and review purposes.
178. There is satisfactory leadership of the department. The head of department has recently rewritten schemes of work for younger students and these now follow national requirements closely. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the number and quality of computers in the school and the student to computer ratio is now favourable. There is an interactive whiteboard in the department though this is as yet underused as teachers get used to its potential. The GNVQ examination has been successfully introduced and the first cohort of students will be finishing this summer. Early indications are that these students will gain at least Pass marks and a number will gain Merit.
179. The cross curriculum element of information technology is evolving in the school. A number of departments such as music, mathematics and technology play an important part in helping to develop and consolidate students' ICT skills. Only a small number of teachers have completed the training offered to them in a government scheme and many lack the confidence to use ICT in their teaching. The school is making appropriate investment in hardware and the student to computer ratio has improved since the last inspection but technical difficulties are slowing development. The Internet connection to the school is slow and this has affected the science department's plans to run a GNVQ course that relies heavily on remote learning. The school is aware of the need to develop a whole-school scheme of work that will direct the learning and teaching of ICT across the curriculum. The school has a valuable resource in its system administrator.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**

### Strengths

- The standard of teaching, especially in German.
- Leadership of the department.
- Very good development plans.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase the amount of German / French used by both teachers and students in lessons.
- Improve curriculum time devoted to modern languages in all years, but especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Increase the amount of information technology used in lessons.

180. Standards at the end of Year 11 during the inspection showed higher attaining students at an average level in both French and German lessons. However, lower attaining students in French were well below average. Written work was limited in quantity and below average standard. This represents satisfactory achievement in view of the low standards attained at the end of Year 9 in 2000.
181. Standards at the end of Year 9 were in line with national expectations in French lessons and below expectations in the written work. In Year 7 German, there were examples of very high standards from individual students. The standards of work indicate good achievement over time.
182. Teaching is a strength of the modern language faculty. Two thirds of lessons were good or very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers are very skilled at their craft. Their planning and presentation of language is very good, they have high expectations of their students, have a good rapport with them and create an orderly classroom environment. As a result the learning of the students is usually good and sometimes very good. They make good use of new material and link it well to language that they have previously learned. Year 7 students are particularly well taught; they speak with good pronunciation and understand most of what they hear, for example on the theme of hobbies. In one such lesson the needs of all students were well met, with good use of a computer to assist a student with special educational needs. In a Year 9 German class students made rapid progress in the use of verbs such as 'may', 'must' and 'can' through the very good presentation of new grammar and the correct word order that is required in German. Pace is usually rapid in language lessons, and was specially rapid in the Year 10 German class where the teacher's clear modelling of the past tense enabled students to express themselves very well on the subject of holidays. With GCSE exams in a few weeks there was good use of time in Year 11 French in preparing students for the listening, reading and writing sections of the syllabus. Learning support assistants are an asset, whilst the foreign language assistant is not adequately used. Teachers have a secure knowledge of German and students speak with satisfactory and often good pronunciation. In French, however, teachers' knowledge is less good. Because of this, and also because of poor learning in previous years, students' pronunciation and speaking skills are often insecure. Most, however, are able to understand what they hear and read. Written work is usually accurate, but rarely more than short answers. Both gifted and talented students and those with special needs make appropriate progress, with some Year 7 students making good progress. There are two weaknesses of provision. Firstly, there is too much English spoken in lessons, with students getting too little opportunity to hear and

speak the foreign language. Secondly, information technology is not used in class teaching, although there is good provision for individuals to use it in lessons.

183. Most students behave well or very well. They have positive attitudes to their learning, and are usually very co-operative. The Year 10 French class was judged to be excellent, as they did everything that was asked of them by the teacher. They work well and without fuss in pairs and groups, and succeed in making good use of the limited time available. With only one exception, classes used time well and were well prepared for their work. Most students have a good knowledge of their levels of learning.
184. The curriculum provision has unsatisfactory elements. There is not enough time available for the learning of languages in all years, especially in Years 10 and 11 where there is only one lesson per week. This is not adequate for delivering the curriculum and one explanation for the lack of written work in students' books. In Years 8 and 9 those students who do both French and German have only one hour per week of each language. This dilutes the effect of the teaching and is not satisfactory. On the other hand setting arrangements are good, enabling all students to work at an appropriate level and raise their confidence. This is especially so in Year 8 where there is good provision of a small bottom set designed for students with special educational needs. In Year 11 there is good provision of a non-GCSE course suited to the needs of lower attaining students. However, in Year 10 only a minority of students are studying a language, with many being disapplied from the National Curriculum. The provision of language clubs out of school hours is good, and there are good opportunities for students to visit France or Germany, which add to the cultural education already built into the foreign language courses.
185. The head of faculty provides good leadership. In just over half a year she has taken positive steps to revive the fortunes of the subject after a downturn previously. Already there are signs of raised standards in Year 7. There are now good policies in place, with very good plans for development in the future. There is good teamwork among the staff with a willingness and capacity to raise standards in the future. The head of faculty has begun monitoring colleagues' lessons. Marking of students' work is good, although marking systems have only recently become consistent between different teachers. Procedures for assessment and recording are good.
186. The number of staff is low, with three German specialists and no French specialists. There are sensible plans to replace French with German in the course of time. This will enable staff to teach to their strengths. The present provision of a foreign language assistant is good, but he is not fully used in lessons, and his value is therefore limited. The supply of textbooks is inadequate, as most students have to share a textbook in lessons. However, in the library there is a satisfactory supply of appropriate reading material for young learners. The supply of equipment is good, including the recent purchase of four computers for use within the faculty, but occasionally the quality of sound produced by some tape recorders is not satisfactory. Accommodation is good, with very good displays.
187. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Whilst there has been a decline in standards over time, the improvement in teaching and learning since September 2001 has been considerable, with most teaching now good or better. Management is now good after a dip between inspections. There is an increase in the amount of extra-curricular activities and the head of faculty is developing good links with the local primary schools.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Most students achieve well, especially boys in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The department is very well managed.
- Most students demonstrate a positive approach and relationships are good.
- Specialist accommodation for practical activities is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve and increase the use of assessment information to track students' progress more closely.
- Raise standards in girls' activities to match that of boys in Years 7, 8 and 9.

188. Attainment on entry to the school is below average in physical skills and in key areas of fitness, for example, in co-ordination and generic ball skills of throwing and catching. Work seen in a Year 7 girls' group indicated that ball skills are still below average for their age. In other classes clear progress is being made. Boys in a cricket lesson achieved well in throwing and catching skills and furthermore many were then able to transfer these skills into small-sided games.
189. By the end of Year 9 overall standards are much closer to the national average levels. Levels of personal fitness are above average in some classes; for example, in a boys' athletics group most students showed a good knowledge of how to prepare for physical activity and skill in a range of athletic events. Girls do not achieve as well as boys and current standards are similar to the pattern shown in last year's end of key stage teacher assessments with fewer girls than boys reaching level 5. In a Year 9 rounders lesson throwing and catching skills were overall below average. The improvement on standards overall at this stage represents good added value to the level of attainment on entry to the school.
190. Overall standards at the age of 16 are in line with national expectations though this judgement is drawn from fewer observations in this age group. The strongest component continues to be the level of personal fitness reached by many students, again especially boys. Their strength is undoubtedly in soccer and in one Year 11 group standards of personal skill and ball control were in the main very good. Work seen in GCSE classes is sound and most students are making good progress. Written work is well presented and mainly accurate in exercise notebooks; project work is more impressive. The quality and volume of work undertaken is good and indicates a further rise in standards if practical performance can match it.
191. Students with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school in physical education and especially in the earlier Years 7, 8 and 9. Success in physical tasks helps raise levels of self-esteem which in turn aids them in making further progress. In all years higher attainers in individual sports and in team games compete and achieve considerable success in local, regional and national events.
192. Most students throughout the school display a positive approach to the work in physical education lessons and in the extensive extra-curricular programme of sports and games provided at lunchtime and after school. These activities are very popular and teachers from the department and from other areas show great commitment to ensuring the high quality of this feature of the school. Almost all students behave well and have a clear understanding of what their teachers expect of them in terms of

behaviour as well as performance. Most are eager to do well and demonstrate, through good standards of personal kit, attendance and participation, their keen interest in the subject.

193. Overall the quality of teaching is good though the teaching of boys is better than that of girls. Where teaching is consistently good, teachers know their subject well and have been successful in devising and managing activities that engage the interest of students and offer them the opportunity to achieve. In many classes, an encouraging style and sensitive feedback ensure that students are aware of how well they are doing. For example, in Year 7 boys' cricket, most students knew that they were improving their catching skills in the game. The next stage in learning, ensuring that students know what to do in order to improve further, is not made sufficiently clear in some girls' lessons; the challenge for improvement is insufficiently well emphasised and consequently standards are not so high and concentration is not always well sustained. Most students learn well and benefit from good relationships amongst themselves and between the students and their teachers. Some older boys are able to work quite independently of their teachers remaining well focused over long periods of time, for example, in Year 10 athletics circuit training where performance, assessment and recording tasks were carried out most maturely and partnerships were most effective.
194. The department is very well managed by a hard-working, capable and committed leader. The organisation of the programme is very good, as are the clearly written and comprehensive practice and policy statements. Assessment procedures are good but the department recognises that there is work to be done on linking learning objectives more closely to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. This will enable much better use of assessment information. Students and parents will be provided with details of achievement and areas for improvement, and the department will have a clear picture of the effectiveness of its work. The facilities provided for the teaching of physical education are very good though the department lacks the focus provided in most subjects through an office and dedicated teaching classrooms. The work of the department needs to be seen as separate from that of expressive arts and the community leisure centre.
195. Since the last inspection, the biggest improvement has been in the nature and quality of the specialist facilities for games. The all-weather surface goes a long way to ensuring continuing activity especially, but not only, throughout the winter months. The availability of this area has enabled much more time to be spent on extra-curricular activities. Overall standards remain similar to those at the time of the last inspection though a GCSE course has now become well established and the department is now considering how the taught curriculum can be developed to offer more students the opportunity to gain accreditation in the subject. With some attention devoted to achieving greater consistency of quality across all teaching the department is well placed to make improvement.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The subject has made very good improvements since the last inspection:
  - improved accommodation;
  - progress in years 7,8 and 9 is now evident;
  - resources have greatly improved.
- Quality of teaching is good.
- Achievement is good at both key stages.
- The department is well led.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no planned opportunities for the use of ICT within the RE curriculum.
- The head of department is not able to devote her full time to developing the religious education department due to also having the responsibility as head of sixth form.

196. Students enter school with low attainment but good progress is made and the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met. In Year 7 students can understand that there are differences between the two gospel accounts of Jesus' birth and can understand that Matthew and Luke had different reasons for writing. To achieve a higher attainment, students would be expected to use the primary source biblical material to analyse the specific differences between the gospel writers and suggest their own reasons for the variation. In Year 8 students can explain how the five senses are used in puja and understand some key words from Hinduism, they are given the experience of tasting dried food, smelling incense and feeling the warmth from a flame. To achieve higher attainment, students would be expected to explain the importance of puja to Hindus and compare puja with worship in another religion. By the end of Year 9, the attainment is below the national average
197. Standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Students build upon the previous work by developing evaluative and analytical skills when considering the problem of suffering in relation to Christianity and Buddhism. The carefully researched and drafted GCSE coursework with close teacher supervision enables students to achieve well. To attain higher grades, it would be expected to see more evidence of extensive writing, apart from the assignments, both in class and for homework. At both key stages, the standards expected are challenging; students are continually encouraged at the appropriate level.
198. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the quality of teaching and learning is good: all six world religions are taught. The learning objectives are written on the board and shared with students. Satisfactory use is made of paired discussion. Students use ICT to produce project work at home or in the library and one Year 9 class used the computer suite to learn about Islam, but there are no planned regular opportunities for using ICT in lessons. The classroom assistant is a key figure in quietly supporting special needs students in their work. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching and learning are good. The lessons are well planned, learning objectives are shared with students and teaching is at a good pace.
199. Students are mostly well behaved and have a positive attitude to learning. The introduction of the GCSE short course has improved the students' attitude to religious education. They participate well orally and carry out written tasks willingly. The discipline is good with teachers using positive reinforcement wherever possible to

encourage students' self-esteem and their learning. Relationships between teacher and student at both key stages are good with a positive mutual respect.

200. The department is managed well and with enthusiasm, there is a comprehensive departmental handbook showing detailed schemes of work in line with the Agreed Syllabus. New initiatives are introduced smoothly. Since the last inspection, accommodation has improved and the RE department now has three adjacent teaching rooms. There are also greatly improved resources, which include artefacts, textbooks and videos. There is now clear progression in the students' learning in Years 7 to 9 due to the schemes of work being delivered by all members of the department. Assessment has also improved with plans for full implementation in Autumn 2002.