

INSPECTION REPORT

WELLINGTON SCHOOL

Timperley, Altrincham

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106373

Headteacher: Mr J Watson

Reporting inspector: A A Henderson
2941

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

Inspection number: 190236

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern non-selective

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 –18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wellington Road
Timperley
Altrincham
Cheshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Holland

Date of previous inspection: 4th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2941	A A Henderson	Registered inspector		<p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well pupils are taught</p> <p>How well the school is led and managed</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9504	S Gurney	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well the school cares for its pupils</p> <p>How well the school works in partnership with parents</p>
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
2644	M MacLeod	Team inspector	Science	
11966	J Clay	Team inspector	Art	
10340	J Lockett	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography Equal opportunities	<p>Sixth form coordinator</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>
12362	L Hindley	Team inspector	History	Citizenship
27803	J Clark		Information and communication technology	
23709	A Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20490	P Wilson	Team inspector	Music	
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education Business education	
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	Religious education	
3930	R Pitcher	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
15109	T Comer	Team inspector		

2959	B Leek	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wellington School is a secondary modern school for boys and girls aged 11–18 which has achieved Technology College status. It is growing in both size and popularity, and is heavily oversubscribed. The school is larger than average with 1220 pupils on roll, of whom 119 are sixth form students. The sixth form provision, an unusual feature for a school of this type, was introduced in 1996 and has developed rapidly from an initial intake of five students to its current healthy size. The school is non-selective, but the LEA operates a selective system which provides grammar school places for between 30-40 per cent of its pupils. As a result, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been below average. The attainment of the two most recent Year 7 intakes to the school is average, higher than in previous years, and indicative of parents' recognition of the school's development. The school's pupils come from a wide mix of social backgrounds; the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has fallen since the previous inspection in 1996 and, at around 8 per cent is lower than average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language is low, and none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils on the register for special educational needs, including those with statements, is lower than average. A key feature is the technology provision for the community that enhances the curriculum of the school. Since the previous inspection, the school has achieved Investor in People status, and has been granted both the Charter Mark and the School Achievement Award in recognition of its outstanding progress.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wellington School is an excellent school where pupils have every opportunity to reach their personal and academic potential. The school has many outstanding features, not least its remarkable rate of improvement and development which coincides with, and to a very large extent results from, the appointment of the current headteacher. A culture of educational achievement is alive in the school, with high expectations for learning, achievement and the fulfilment of individual pupils' capabilities. Teaching is good overall, much of it being very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils achieve well, and results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations are above the national average, and well above those for similar schools. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, and the overall management of the school is very effective. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The purpose and vision of the excellent leadership of the school provides the key to its many successes.
- Pupils achieve well in relation to their previous attainment, and standards are improving rapidly.
- Overall, teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection.
- The quality of relationships, attitudes and behaviour are outstanding strengths of the school.
- The school cares very well for its pupils, with excellent provision for their personal, moral and social development.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities is excellent.
- Strategic planning for improvement is very strong, and is underpinned by very good financial management.

What could be improved

- Pupils' attainment and progress in ICT in Years 7-11.
- Arrangements for design and technology in Years 10 and 11 do not meet statutory requirements.
- Current temporary arrangements are not providing appropriate coordination and leadership for work with pupils with special educational needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 is excellent. In the sixth form it is good. There has been impressive progress in improving academic standards across Years 7-11. This improvement has been strongly supported by good teaching, which itself has improved, and by the growing strength of pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal development. The clarity, strength and determination of the school's intention to ensure 'Excellence in Everything' is successfully translated into action through improved leadership and management of pupils' academic and pastoral development. Issues raised by the previous inspection have been successfully tackled in most respects. However, concerns remain regarding the curriculum post 16, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Despite notable improvement, the school is not consistently providing a daily act of collective worship. These few shortcomings are offset by notable improvements to the school's accommodation, particularly for the sixth form, and by the national recognition of the school's exceptional improvement since 1996.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	B	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	E	E	

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Results in National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 in 2001 were above average compared with all schools, and well above average for similar schools (that is, schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). Performance, based on average points scored, was above average in English, and average in mathematics and science, although when compared with similar schools, it was well above average for each of these core subjects. Since the previous inspection in 1996, the test results in these subjects have improved steadily at a faster rate than that found nationally.

In 1996, GCSE results in the school were well below the national average. Since then, the rate of improvement has been remarkable, and far ahead of the national trend. In 2001, pupils' average GCSE points score was well above the national average, and very high when compared with similar schools. Girls did better than boys, more so than the national variation, but both were well above their respective national averages. The school considerably exceeded its appropriate targets. The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ passes at the higher A*-C grades was above the national average, and well above average for similar schools. The proportion achieving 5+ passes across the full range of A*-G grades included almost all those having special educational needs, and was well above average for both national and similar school results.

A very high proportion of pupils are entered for eight or more GCSE examinations – the school is very successful in ensuring that results are well above average, and that a high proportion of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve worthwhile national qualifications. Given their earlier attainment levels at the end of Year 9, many pupils are achieving results at GCSE that are better than expected.

Since the previous inspection, A-level results have been below or well below average. During that time the sixth form has grown rapidly in size, and statistical comparisons can be misleading. In 2001, the average points score per student was well below average. Two-thirds of students successfully passed their examinations, with one in twelve students gaining the higher A-B grades. The results in AS examinations taken by Year 12 students were below average, although showing signs of improving performance. Standards of work seen during the inspection were better than previous examination results would suggest, being average in all subjects seen except mathematics, ICT and French where they are below average. These generally average levels of attainment represent good progress by the students, many of whom have relatively modest GCSE performance when they enter the sixth form. It is noteworthy that most successfully complete their courses and continue to the higher education courses of their choice.

Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils throughout Years 7-11 produce work that is above average. This represents good achievement and progress in Years 7 to 9 for all pupils, including those with special

educational needs. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are average elsewhere, except in ICT where standards are below expectation. Pupils' good achievement is sustained in Years 10 and 11, and better than average standards were seen in almost all subjects. Work in geography and design and technology is average, whilst ICT remains below average. Pupils' skills in literacy are above average, and are average in numeracy – both are sufficiently well developed to provide access to learning in all subjects. Standards in the use of ICT are improving, but are not yet high enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils like school and are very committed to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is consistently very good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent, and pupils grow in responsibility and maturity at a fast rate.
Attendance	Attendance is good, and above the national average. Unauthorised absence is rare.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning are consistently good, and is a main reason for the school's success. Overall teaching shows a marked improvement since the previous inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and the generally good consistency of teaching quality across subjects is a major strength.

Teaching in English is good across the school. In mathematics and science it is good in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form. Teaching is notably effective in modern foreign languages and history, and is good across the school in art, geography, design and technology, physical education, music and religious education. Examples of good teaching feature in every subject, and the learning needs of all pupils are well met.

Frequently teaching is very good, and on occasion excellent. As a result, learning is very effective and reflected in the very good attitudes pupils bring to their work. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, and is resulting in improving standards as knowledge of the new specifications combines with the strong commitment of sixth form students to their studies. Teaching across the school is consistent and well-informed, and the expectations of teachers are high. The management of pupils is an outstanding strength of the teaching and pupils respond very positively, so that there is a shared commitment to learning which ensures their progress is good. The skills of literacy are taught well in many subjects. The teaching of numeracy skills is satisfactory, although less consistent, and requires improved coordination. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught and make good progress when support is used well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are good, and have improved considerably. Provision for PSHE and careers is very good. The excellent programme of extra-curricular activities is a major feature. The curriculum in Years 10-11 is unsatisfactory because not all pupils take design and technology; this is a statutory requirement.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to good teaching. Although the Code of Practice is in place, there is no specialist coordinator for special educational needs at present.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are a small number of pupils with English as an additional language. None are at an early stage of language acquisition, and their progress is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Moral and social development are excellent. The arrangements for spiritual development have improved considerably, and are now good, as is provision for pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The arrangements for pupils' health, safety and welfare are very good. The monitoring of behaviour, attendance and personal development is very good also. Assessment procedures are good, and information is used well to support pupils' progress.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school's links with parents are very effective, and the school works hard to keep them well informed. As a result, parents are very pleased with the progress their children make.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides the vision and impetus that has led to remarkable improvement, and guides the future development of the school. He is very well supported by the deputies and senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governance is excellent. The governors are highly committed to the school's well-being. They are well-informed, and monitor standards well. They determine school and financial priorities, and evaluate change and development thoroughly before implementation. However, statutory curriculum requirements for design and technology are not in place, and arrangements for collective worship are not consistent.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The management and governing body very successfully promote an ethos of continued improvement and self-evaluation across the school. A key feature in the school's strategic planning is central focus of improving teaching and learning in raising standards in all aspects of school life.
The strategic use of resources	Financial administration and principles of best value are well managed and linked to school priorities. There are sufficient teachers. Resources are good, although the library is short of books. Accommodation has improved notably, and is very good. Specific grants are properly spent, although funds for special educational needs were unspent last year.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school, and their behaviour is good.• Their children are required to work hard and therefore make good progress.• Teaching is good.• The school is well led and managed.• School works closely with parents, provides good information and is approachable.• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons, and is helping children to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small minority are concerned about too much homework.

The views of parents are overwhelmingly positive. Inspectors' findings confirm these very positive opinions. Inspectors judge that homework is very well used across the school, and is an important factor in the good progress pupils are making.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form was introduced in 1996, and numbers of students have grown steadily since then. Currently there are 119 students on roll which is smaller than average. There is a good range of traditional academic courses and only one advanced vocational course. Access to the sixth form is flexible, although students who enrol on advanced courses are generally expected to have achieved at least a grade C at GCSE in the subjects they select. In 2001 about a third of pupils from Year 11 continued their education in the sixth form, and for the first time a small number joined from other schools. Although some students begin with good GCSE performance, in general the attainment on entry to advanced level courses is lower than in most sixth forms.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provision is good, and is cost effective. In 2001, A level examination results were well below average, but represented satisfactory achievement in relation to the students' GCSE performance. Some of the lowest attaining students at GCSE achieved notable success. The AS level results in 2001 for students in Year 12 were below average, with most achieving well given their relatively modest prior attainment. Teaching and learning are good, and are helping students to achieve above what might be expected. Students' personal development is strongly enhanced by the excellent enrichment programme, which includes key skills, religious education and a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

Strengths

- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- Students' attitudes and personal development are excellent – they have a strong commitment both to their studies and to the school.
- Very good pastoral support and guidance underpin the excellent relationships between students and staff.
- Teaching is consistently good and ensures that students learn effectively, make good progress and complete their courses.
- The curriculum includes the teaching of key skills, religious education and an excellent enrichment programme.
- Arrangements for study, and the provision of sixth form accommodation are strong features.

What could be improved

- The match of curriculum course provision to students' aptitudes and capabilities.
- Assessment data should be used more widely to set targets for academic improvement, both for subjects and individual students in raising standards of attainment.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English literature	Good. Standards average after a decline in last two years. Students achieve well, benefiting from good teaching and very good support for progress through very good marking and assessment.
Physics	Good. Results last year show the expected achievement considering the students' GCSE levels on entry. The introduction of a more appropriate course, rich in learning resource and well taught, is producing higher achievement by students.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. The commitment of the teachers ensures that all students, including many who find the level of work difficult, are able to achieve satisfactorily. Assessment procedures need closer links with A-level grades and students' targets.
Geography	Good. Results have improved gradually and are close to average. Teaching and learning are consistently good and sometimes very good. The pace of learning during some lessons varies and on occasion is too slow.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Results below average but students make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily as a result of sound teaching. Good potential for improvement if the standard of coursework is improved by more frequent assessments and effective teacher intervention.
Design and technology	Good. Results are improving. The numbers taking the subject are increasing year on year, now including female students for the first time. Coursework is a strength. Students are achieving well in response to good teaching. Assessment is thorough. Students lack knowledge of engineering terms and processes which are not taught in Years 7-11.
Art and design	Good. Overall, standards are average and in 2001 A level results were above average. Students are achieving well because teaching is good and pupils have mature discussions about art with their teachers.
French	Good. Numbers choosing the subject have been low, but are rising. Achievement is good because of the excellent attitudes of students and the good teaching, although standards are below average. Marking requires more rigour.
Business education	Satisfactory. This is a new course – initial results are well below average. Currently, students are making satisfactory progress in response to satisfactory teaching. Links with the local business world need development.

Work in nine other subjects were sampled. Teaching was almost consistently good, and sometimes very good, with positive impact on the students' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support and guidance for students are very good. Their personal and academic progress are well monitored, although more use could be made of assessment data in setting individual targets.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and effectively managed. The school's aims and values are reflected throughout the sixth form provision. There is a structured plan for further development, and governors have played an important part in this.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of information and induction into the sixth form are valued.• The teaching is very good, with good information about their progress.• Support and guidance and the accessibility of teachers are strengths.• They enjoy the sixth form and feel they are helped strongly to be independent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some feel there is insufficient careers advice for employment.• Some feel the range of courses is limited.• Some feel that they should be treated more responsibly, and their views taken more into account.• Some feel that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited.

Overall, students are very positive and supportive of the school and the sixth form. Inspectors agree with the students' positive views. They also agree that the range of courses is too narrow for some students' aptitudes, but feel that careers advice is generally good, although more emphasis is given to guidance towards higher education than employment. Although some do not agree, student consultation is effective and their views are taken into account. Similarly, the range of extra-curricular opportunities is judged to be extensive, and more than is usually found.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school have been below average, and have not reflected those expected for a typical secondary school. This is not surprising given the circumstances of the school, within a Local Education Authority (LEA) which operates a selective system. As a result, around 35-40 per cent of the highest attaining primary school pupils transfer to grammar schools at the age of 11. Very recently, attainment on entry to Wellington has shown improvement. Results in the national tests taken by pupils aged 11 in 2001 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels is slightly above average in English, and is average in mathematics and science. The intake includes a broad range of ability, but with few pupils who are above average. This is confirmed by the standardised tests administered by the LEA in Year 6, which show that, despite the recently improving profile, overall the current school population is below average.

2. In 2001 the results in the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils aged 14 were above average compared with all schools. Based on average points scored, pupils' performance in English was above average, and was average in both mathematics and science. Since the previous inspection in 1996, results have steadily improved at a rate which exceeds the national improvement, with girls ahead of boys, in line with the national difference. When compared with the results of similar schools, (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), results overall, and in each of the core subjects - English, mathematics and science – were well above average.

3. At the time of the last inspection in 1996, results in GCSE examinations were well below the national average. Since then the rate of improvement in GCSE performance has been remarkable, and far ahead of the national trend. A very high proportion of pupils take GCSE examinations in eight or more subjects at the end of Year 11. Virtually all, including those with special educational needs, are entered for at least five subjects, which is very impressive when the school's context within an LEA selective system is taken into account. It is a major strength of the school that pupils respond so well, and that it achieves results which are well above average. The school is very successful in ensuring that a very high proportion of its pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve worthwhile national qualifications.

4. In 2001, the school's average GCSE points score per pupil was well above average. Girls scored more highly than boys, more so than is nationally the case, but both boys' and girls' results were well above their respective national averages. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher A*-C grades was above the national average, and was well above average for those achieving five or more passes across the full range of grades A*-G. Compared with similar school (that is, schools having a similar prior attainment by pupils in the National Curriculum tests at age 14, and also a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results achieved by the school were also well above average. The 2001 average GCSE points score results were very high, and place the school in the top five per cent of similar schools. Overall, this high level of performance has ensured that the school has exceeded its targets for GCSE in both 2000 or 2001 by considerable margins.

5. GCSE results for subjects for 2001 show some variation for A*-C grades. They were well above average in English literature, and above average in English, mathematics, French, design and technology, art, religious education and home economics, and were slightly above in geography and history. Results were close to average in science, and were below average in other subjects. Both boys and girls did better in design and technology than in their other GCSE and GNVQ examination subjects, whilst girls also did better in art and geography, and boys in physical education, and health and social care. Girls did less well in leisure and tourism, and boys in business studies.

6. In work seen during the inspection standards reflect the test and examination results and are above average. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are average in all other subjects, except information and communications technology (ICT) where standards are below expectation. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work seen are also above average overall. Work in music, art and religious education improves so that standards are above average. The better than average standards seen

previously are sustained in Years 10 and 11 in English, mathematics, science, history, French and physical education. Work seen during the inspection in geography, and design and technology is generally average, whilst ICT continues to be below average at this stage.

7. The school is setting overall targets for improvement in the attainment of pupils at GCSE. These are challenging, and based on predictions for each pupil using data which links their prior attainment and Year 9 test results with GCSE outcomes. Most subjects are beginning to use this information well to inform their planning and monitor pupils' progress, and to develop strategies to promote improvement. The positive impact of this work is reflected in the marked improvement in GCSE results in 2001, and there is need to consolidate this work and extend the process from GCSE into the sixth form.

8. Pupils, including those for whom English is not their first language, make good progress and achieve well as they move through the school. Given their average starting points, pupils' achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good in virtually all subjects in response to good teaching and very high expectations. At this stage pupils' progress is satisfactory in ICT, and good in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to build on their improving attainment, and their achievement and progress is good almost universally. Progress is acceptable in ICT at this stage, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, overall pupils' achievements are good in response to the consistently good quality of teaching which ensures that many more pupils than usual gain GCSE grades in at least five subjects. Most pupils with special educational needs attain the standards they are capable of and make good progress. Virtually all pupils on the special educational needs register are entered for GCSE examinations, and in 2001 nearly all gained at least five more passes at grades A*-G.

Standards in key skills

9. The standards of the pupils' literacy are above average. Most pupils write with clarity, spell accurately and present their work well. Their exercise books and folders show a high level of extended and completed work. Most read fluently and with good expression. They use the library well for leisure and information reading. Their spoken contributions in class are fluent.

10. Standards of numeracy are average. Sound support for development is emerging within the mathematics programme of study. Skills are developing well in some subjects, notably geography, ICT and science, where statistical graphs, data handling and the use of the four rules of number are part of the learning opportunities offered to pupils. Whilst the national numeracy strategy is improving pupils' arithmetic confidence and fluency in mathematics, a coordinated approach for developing numeracy skills across the curriculum has only recently begun.

11. Standards in ICT are below average overall, but are improving. Good progress has been made in developing opportunities for the use and application of ICT across the curriculum. Where it is used systematically, standards are at least average, and sometimes better than this, often involving the use of spreadsheets and desktop publishing skills, for example, in history, design and technology, and modern foreign languages.

Sixth form

12. At the time of the previous inspection in 1996, the school had just been granted its change of character which enabled the introduction of the sixth form. Initially, five students took up the opportunity. Since then, the rate of growth in the sixth form has been considerable, so that currently there are 51 students in Year 13, and 68 in Year 12 following A and AS level examination courses. Since its inception overall results in A-level examinations in the sixth form have been well below average – hardly unexpected given the below average entry profile of this secondary modern school. In 2001, the average A-level points score was well below average, with male students attaining more highly than the female students. The overall pass rate was marginally less than two-thirds of students successfully completing their courses, including just one in twelve gaining the higher A-B grades. Statistical comparisons can be misleading, given the nature of the sixth form and the low entry numbers in some subjects. However, results in 2001 in art were above average with all candidates successfully gaining pass grades, including one-third at the higher A-B grades. There was also a 100 per cent pass rate in chemistry and physical education, whilst geography also enabled one-third of students to pass at the higher A-B grades. The weakest examination results were in biology, mathematics and general studies.

13. The overall results in the new AS examinations taken by students in Year 12 show signs of improving standards in the sixth form performance. In 2001, whilst below average, the overall success rate was 71 per cent, with one pass in eight at A-B grades. Results in English, media studies, psychology and history were good with virtually all students achieving pass grades, including high proportions with A-B grades. The weakest results in the AS examinations were in mathematics and biology.

14. Further evidence of the improving sixth form standards emerged in the work seen during the inspection, where standards in subjects in Years 12 and 13 are average overall, and stronger than previous examination results would suggest. The inspection of lessons and review of students' work confirm that standards are below average in mathematics, ICT and French, but are average in all other subjects that were the focus of the inspection of the sixth form. This includes a range of attainment within year groups, for example, standards in art and English are higher than average in Year 12, although generally average in Year 13. Standards in key skills are average with most students attaining at least level 2. Teachers generally pay due attention to the key skills of communication, use of number and facility with ICT, and this supports students' learning well. In subjects such as English, geography, design and technology and art the secondary skills of working together and problem-solving are developing effectively.

15. Students' progress and achievement in the sixth form are good. When they start the sixth form, some students have below average GCSE attainment. Overall, the GCSE performance of students entering the sixth form is lower than is usually found. Given their relatively modest prior attainment, most are making good progress and are achieving well in their A-level examinations. Course completion rates are high, reflecting the students' determination to succeed. In 2001, the students with the highest GCSE attainment achieved their expected results in the A-level examinations. Those with the lowest attainment also achieved satisfactorily with some notably good individual performances, whilst the middle group included some underachievement in the examinations. This satisfactory picture has improved since then, and currently students are achieving well. They are responding positively to the good quality of teaching which has high expectations of them, and many are showing very strong commitment to their studies. Progress and achievement are notably strong in English, and generally good elsewhere, for example, in design and technology, science, geography, art and French. In all other subjects, progress and achievement are as expected in relation to students' previous GCSE performance.

16. Overall, students are achieving well in the sixth form. As lower attaining entrants to A and AS level courses, most successfully complete their courses, and given their starting points, achieve what might be expected. The sixth form arrangements are increasingly successful in meeting students' needs. Importantly, the school is very effective in enabling its students to access higher education courses of their choice successfully.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils like school and show very positive attitudes to their learning. In lessons they are attentive and concentrate well. They co-operate and collaborate well and show willingness to help each other. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations, work hard and persevere. Most, including those with special educational needs, show a high degree of commitment, take pride in their work and are keen to succeed. They appreciate the facilities and resources available, look after them and use them safely and sensibly. Lessons observed, for example, in English, history and religious education, showed pupils responding with maturity and commenting perceptively. They learn to face up to conflicting opinions and show an interest in demanding concepts. All Year 7 pupils take part in at least one extra-curricular activity and participation is very good throughout the school, particularly in sporting and musical activities.

18. Parents agree that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils, both in class and around the school, is very good. Pupils consider the school rules to be fair and they respond well to rewards and certificates earned. These are proudly entered into their records of achievement. Pupils are polite and friendly and welcoming to visitors. There is a most civilised atmosphere in the dining room and pupils queue patiently for their meals. Poor behaviour is not tolerated. The level of fixed period exclusions is well above the national average, but is justified because this ensures behaviour in school remains very good and classes are rarely disrupted by unruly pupils.

19. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils relate very well to their teachers and trust them. Bullying is rare. No pupil interviewed considered bullying an issue and they were confident that any incidents would be swiftly dealt with, should they occur. Pupils from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are very well integrated into the school. Pupils show respect and concern for the feelings of others. An example was in a Year 8 tutorial period when pupils listened to others' short presentations attentively and respectfully, even though they were sometimes quite hard to follow. The annual sponsored walk for charity, which last year realised over £12,000, also shows the high level of pupils' care and concern for others less fortunate than themselves.

20. From Year 7, pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities and do so willingly. The school council is an excellent vehicle for promoting good citizenship and giving pupils from every year the opportunity to represent their classes. It also gives pupils a sense of ownership of the school as they are often able to make suggestions and changes. Prefects in Years 10 and 11 formally apply for their jobs and are interviewed. This ensures their commitment and involvement in the life of the school. Successful candidates take on a range of duties and organise their own rota system. The PSHE programme is successful in promoting personal development and almost all parents agree their children are helped to become mature and responsible.

21. Attendance is good and above the national average. Unauthorised absence is rare. Punctuality is generally good though there are a few pupils who are persistently late.

Sixth form

22. The sixth form is very rapidly gaining in popularity and students display excellent attitudes to their learning and to school life. They find the residential induction programmes held at different universities to be both valuable and enjoyable. Almost all those responding to their questionnaire felt that they were well taught and that their teachers were accessible and very ready to offer help and advice. Almost all enjoy life in the sixth form. They appreciate the help given to enable them to become independent learners. They are very committed and hard working and take a pride in their academic achievements. They co-operate well with one another. They engage actively in class discussions and are able to debate and challenge others whilst respecting their views. A good example of constructive debate was shown in a Year 12 general studies class when they were discussing whether or not the Elgin marbles should be returned to Greece. Students appreciate the excellent curricular enrichment programme which, as well as reinforcing key skills, introduces them to a range of interesting visiting speakers. Students develop a pleasing level of maturity and perspicacity. A good example was seen in a Year 12 English lesson where students engaged in articulate, spontaneous discussion about the character of Heathcliffe in 'Wuthering Heights'.

23. Students' levels of personal development are excellent. There are many opportunities for them to take initiative. For example, they are organising a book to celebrate 2002. A sixth form social committee equates to a sixth form council. It is a vehicle for airing views and getting things done. Students undertake a range of responsibilities and are excellent role models for younger pupils. As in Years 10 and 11, student managers (prefects) must formally apply for their jobs. Whereas the more regular duties are carried out by the younger prefects, student managers have more of a public relations role. They greet visitors and show them round. With other sixth formers they help at open evenings and consultation evenings. They play a valuable part in the Year 7 induction. In small groups they address assemblies for Years 9, 10 and 11, encouraging them to continue in the sixth form whilst impressing the need for hard work and commitment. A number of sixth formers act as paid mentors to younger pupils in the after school homework club. Younger pupils find them very helpful. They also chair and take the minutes for the school council and help younger delegates with their reporting and communication skills.

24. Students' attendance is very good and slightly higher than that of the rest of the school. Overall the standards of students' attitudes, values and personal development are excellent. Their level of commitment is demonstrated by the fact that last year 94 per cent of the students completed their 'A' level courses and 62 per cent of them went on to higher education.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Across the school, the overall quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes are good. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching seen is at least good in two-thirds of lessons, with more than one quarter very good or better. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is also at least good in two-thirds of lessons seen, with one lesson in five judged very good or better. Teaching in English is good. In both mathematics and science, teaching is good overall, although stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 as a result of temporary staffing difficulties.

26. Teaching shows a marked improvement since the previous inspection - no unsatisfactory teaching was seen this time, whilst in around a quarter of lessons in Years 7-11 teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. This consistently good quality of teaching is a main reason why the school is successful. The impact of the school's focus since the previous inspection on raising achievement, linked to the evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning, has clearly been extremely effective. As a result, the strong teaching quality combines with pupils' very good attitudes and learning skills to ensure that they make rapid progress, and are key factors in the remarkable improvement in test and examination results since 1996.

27. Teaching is notably effective in modern foreign languages and history. It is good across the school in art, geography, design and technology, physical education, music and religious education. Elsewhere, teaching is always satisfactory, with some examples of good teaching featuring in every subject area. Teachers know their subjects well, are enthusiastic about them and present them to pupils in a lively and motivating manner. This positive presentation of their subjects has a strong impact on pupils' rates of progress and attainment, and teachers generally have created very good learning environments in which pupils can develop their academic and personal potential.

28. Teachers generally explain to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, featuring in many subjects, pupils' progress and understanding are regularly checked, and drawn together in effective lesson summaries. Almost all subjects use a range of teaching strategies that are appropriate for the work taking place. Collaborative work is especially strong in physical education, science, English, geography, art, music, and design and technology. However, in ICT there is an over-dependence on teachers which restricts the development of pupils' independent learning in the subject.

29. Most lessons proceed at a very purposeful pace, often with effective questioning which develops pupils' speaking and listening, tests their knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. This approach was notably successful in an excellent Year 7 geography lesson on weather and climate which included opportunities for pupils to role play the presentation of weather forecasts.

30. Teachers plan their work well, and tasks are mainly well matched to the needs and capabilities of all pupils in most subjects, including those for whom English is not their first language. Awareness of the needs of the most able pupils is developing rapidly, and good examples of work which extended their capabilities was seen in English, mathematics and history. The progress of lower attaining pupils is supported effectively by appropriate tasks and resources, often in smaller teaching groups, but, as at the previous inspection, would benefit from improved classroom assistance.

31. A further feature of the better teaching is the high expectations that this teaching has of pupils. Teachers expect answers to be thorough and comprehensive. This was very clear in an excellent lesson in German with higher attaining pupils in Year 9. Brisk teaching and high expectations for grammatical accuracy ensured pupils (who have only started to study this language this year) achieved well. Learning in this lesson was excellent, and pupils are making very good progress.

32. Assessment procedures are good, and teachers are making increasing progress in using information relating to pupils' attainment to set targets for individuals. As a result, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have an understanding of their potential in subjects, and of their progress and learning. Marking is diligent and supportive, with some subjects making use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades to help pupils understand how their work compares with national expectations, although work in ICT is not marked or graded often enough. Very good use is made of homework to support pupils' learning, and this is contributing to the improvement in standards in many subjects.

33. The management of pupils is an outstanding strength of the teaching. Relationships are excellent – teachers are good role models and relate very well to pupils, providing a high level of individual support

and encouragement. Expectations of behaviour and response are high. Whilst teachers have to work hard to maintain full control in a few lessons, discipline is very good. Many teachers are good listeners who treat all pupils with equal respect. As a result, the school is notably free from tension, and has a strong atmosphere of trust and consideration in which pupils are able to thrive in their learning and personal development.

34. Strategies for teaching literacy are good. Despite the absence of a formal policy, good progress is being made in subjects, particularly in the development of spelling, the use of key words and structured writing. As a result, standards of literacy are above average and provide pupils with good access to learning in all subjects. The development of numeracy skills is less advanced, and the school is currently exploring strategies to establish a coherent approach across the school. However, in general, the teaching has ensured that pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed, and support their learning effectively in some subjects, for example, in geography, science and ICT.

35. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is usually at least good or better. Very good teaching of these pupils was seen in English, French, history and physical education where the individual education plans were used imaginatively with considerable success across all years. In particular, an English lesson with Year 10 pupils showed in an excellent fashion how, with skilled and appropriately demanding teaching, pupils with special educational needs can do very well in literature. A similar feature was noted in Year 7 where pupils with special educational needs grappled effectively with the ideas in the novel "Skellig" by David Almond. The teaching of the specialist teachers from the LEA Learning Support Service is very good and is crucial to pupils who have full educational statements. The Literacy Progress Units which takes place after school for pupils in Year 7 who are still at level 3 in English are very effective. Although much good or better teaching was seen, often teachers did not involve support staff in planning their work as effectively as they could.

Sixth form

36. The quality of teaching in the sixth form, and the learning that it promotes, is good. Around three-quarters of the teaching seen is at least good, with one lesson in seven judged to be very good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

37. A range of sixth form subjects was sampled during the inspection, and in none was teaching unsatisfactory. Nine subjects were inspected in greater depth. In these 'focus' subjects, teaching and learning were good in English, mathematics, physics, French, geography, art and design technology, and were satisfactory in ICT and business education. Examples of good teaching featured in each subject, with some lessons of the highest quality, for example, in Year 12 English and Year 12 chemistry.

38. Standards in the sixth form are showing signs of steady improvement in response to this good quality of teaching. The growth of the sixth form since its recent inception has been considerable – there is a growing confidence in the teaching as expectation of the required standards and knowledge of the new specifications develop. This, together with the strong commitment and determination to succeed of the sixth form students, results in standards of work seen during the inspection which are higher than recent examination results would suggest.

39. Specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are good. In the most effective lessons, expectations of students' response are high, so that they are required to tackle challenging tasks and activities with consequent positive impact on their progress and attainment. This was the case, for example, in a very successful Year 12 chemistry lesson which extended students' understanding of the structure of alkenes and electrophilic addition. A similarly successful approach was seen in a Year 13 English lesson in which the relationship between Mr. Rochester and Jane in 'Jane Eyre' was critically analysed.

40. Across the sixth form, teachers plan work very well. Planning is carefully linked to the course specifications and for the differing learning needs of students. When new work is introduced, it is done with care so that when students come to work independently, purposes are clear and the requirements for examination success are clearly rehearsed. Teachers take time at the start of lessons to identify objectives, and at the end of lessons to check with students whether these have been achieved. They usually explain to students what they have to learn and why, as in a very effective Year 12 design and technology lesson on lamination and dovetail joints.

41. Elsewhere, teaching styles and working methods are generally appropriate to developing learning skills for sixth form students. On occasion, in some lessons there are limited opportunities for collaboration and debate. This can result in some over-dependence on the teacher, and in restricted opportunity for students to enjoy the challenge and enrichment of extended dialogue and debate with their peers. Where this opportunity is provided, students' learning is greatly enhanced, as for example in a Year 12 English lesson on 'Wuthering Heights'. Lively debate and thoughtful analysis ensued in response to excellent teaching approaches, with a high level of engagement by students in the activities. Their articulate and well structured contributions provided a clear illustration of the effective attention given to key skills in many lessons. In addition to the well-taught formal structure for developing students' key skills in the sixth form, the three components, communication, application of number, and ICT are taught well within many of the subject specific courses.

42. Lessons proceed at a very purposeful pace, often with effective questioning which encourages students' communication skills, tests knowledge and understanding, and leads skilfully on to new work. Individual support is frequently provided to good effect, as in a very good Year 12 art lesson where students successfully developed their personal studies with strong teacher interaction. Assessment procedures are generally good, but show considerable variation, being very good in English, art and design technology, but less satisfactory in French and ICT. Homework is very well used in subjects, and is supported by regular, supportive marking, often with clear guidance for improvement, notably in English. In mathematics, however, marking is not clearly linked to A-level grades. As a result, students are not always clear about their relative performance compared with the standards expected for examination success.

43. Relationships are excellent in the sixth form. Teachers are hardworking, committed, knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They relate well to students, and provide high levels of support and encouragement. This is highly valued by the students who feel that these qualities are a main strength of the school's sixth form provision. Teachers expect that students will do their best and this is reflected in the students' determination and application to their studies. The school has high expectations of both students and teachers – both respond well to the challenge.

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

44. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls and all the different groups of pupils in the school. However, in Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is unsatisfactory because a quarter of the pupils do not take design and technology, and this is a statutory requirement. In Years 7 to 11 the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE).

45. All pupils now have specialist lessons of ICT in Years 7 to 9 and all receive this entitlement in Years 10 and 11. The time for religious education has been increased to enable the full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils are now entered for English literature and many take short courses in physical education and religious education. German has been included in Year 9 for the more able pupils as a second modern foreign language. Curriculum planning in all subjects, including the use of a variety of teaching methods, has been beneficial for all pupils. The governors are now rigorously involved in evaluating the provision of the curriculum. These improvements are underpinned with a new day structure that provides more teaching time. As a result of all these developments the curriculum has provided a very good foundation for the improvement of standards in the school.

46. In Years 7 to 9 the proportion of time for design and technology is lower than that normally found, and affects the range of work covered. The time given to geography and history is very generous. There is scope in these years to further broaden pupils' learning through, for example, the provision of drama. For some more able pupils the three separate sciences in Year 9 would begin to provide continuity and progression through Years 10 and 11 and into the sixth form. These developments are under consideration.

47. An innovative and successful feature of the curricular provision is the enhancement programme in

Year 8. Each subject develops a theme from the syllabus to provide stimulating learning experiences. For example, in ICT pupils share their learning with primary school pupils, and in science and technology pupils visit the Science and Technology museum in Manchester. The aim is to sustain the enthusiasm and excitement for learning that pupils generally show in Year 7.

48. There is an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils appreciate the time teachers give to these activities and this work does much to extend their learning experiences. Most subjects provide extra support for coursework and provide revision courses during the holidays for GCSE and A-level subjects. Many pupils take part in musical activities. Instrumental teaching has a strong impact on learning and annual events, for example, the concerts in Bridgewater Hall, extend the curriculum and set high standards for pupils. There is an extensive range of clubs, and trips are arranged locally, nationally and abroad for educational and recreational purposes. These include regular visits to theatres and museums. The use of the learning resource centre for supporting homework is exemplary practice. There is a very good range of 13 extra-curricular sports including school teams and inter-form competitions and consequently the participation rate is high.

49. The provision of PSHE is very good. It is very well planned and resourced and includes drugs, sex and careers education and guidance as well as aspects of citizenship. Visiting speakers and drama groups make a considerable input, for example, on the Industry Day in Year 9. An excellent feature is the opportunity for all pupils to take the Young Lifesavers award in Years 7 to 9. The school has received recognition for its rapid progress towards obtaining the Healthy Schools award.

50. The careers education and guidance programme is good. Pupils are prepared carefully for work experience during Year 10. This takes place at the end of the autumn term in Year 11 and is monitored by staff visits. The input of the local careers adviser is very effective and all pupils have the opportunity of a careers interview. The careers library is well used and accessible outside lesson times.

51. The school provides vocational education in Years 10 and 11 in art and design, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. Leisure and tourism is only available to pupils who take single science, and health and social care competes with GCSE child development. Vocational education is, therefore, limited. The opportunity to provide coherent vocational courses for some pupils from age 14 through to age 19, matched to their interests, aptitudes and abilities is missed.

52. Pupils with special educational needs receive their full curriculum entitlement and none are disapplied from it in any year. They follow the whole school policy of predominantly GCSE courses in Years 10-11, with few wider work-related curriculum opportunities which have more relevance to their long-term life chances.

53. The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. The school, partly through its technology college status, has developed very good links with its local primary schools. In addition to regular formal teaching undertaken in the local feeder primary schools, ICT courses are provided during half-terms and the Easter holidays for pupils from Year 4 upwards whose parents wish them to enhance their skills. Wellington also welcomes primary children, one class at a time, to experience a day's teaching during the summer term. A varied and enjoyable programme is offered which benefits the whole class, not just the pupils transferring to Wellington. Pupils also come to Wellington for sports coaching and "sporting Saturdays". This is of great benefit to children from primary schools which often lack sports facilities and expertise.

54. The school has some very profitable sponsorship links with business and industry. For example, the school's catering company built the new dining hall. The main local industrial employer is building a new reception area and the school's bank pays for hire of Bridgewater Hall twice a year so that events such as awards evenings can be held in a spacious, comfortable and "special" setting.

55. Provision for pupils' personal development has improved since the previous inspection to the extent that it is now very good and is a significant strength of the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is now good although the requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils is not fully met. The school has, nevertheless, worked hard to meet this statutory requirement. Themes for assemblies and for the "thought for the day" for tutor groups are well planned in advance. The fact that this feature of daily school life is also monitored by heads of year is indicative of the seriousness with

which the school takes this responsibility. Assemblies are very orderly occasions which provide pupils with opportunities to reflect and pray. For example, Year 9 pupils' behaviour in their weekly assembly was immaculate. They listened with interest and attention as they were invited to think of those less fortunate than themselves, especially the bereaved, and to count their own blessings. Form tutors are well supported with ideas for sharing the thought for the day with their pupils, and usually some opportunity for reflection takes place.

56. The ethos of the school also promotes spiritual development. For example, in history, Year 7 pupils created a thought provoking and impressive display of media coverage of the events of September 11th which still captures attention as pupils and adults pass by. Similarly, a sensitively arranged display celebrating the life of George Harrison attracts attention on the music corridor. Religious education is provided for all sixth form students, in accordance with the requirements of the local Agreed syllabus. Provision for pupils' spiritual development also occurs through the subjects, particularly religious education where, for example pupils consider "difficult" questions such as the problem of evil or proofs for the existence of God. Good opportunities for spiritual development are also provided in English through pupils' writing about relationships and relevant values. Contributions are also made in subjects such as art, music and design technology.

57. Provision for pupils' moral development is of a very high order and its quality is reflected in the standards of behaviour observed in classrooms, the calm atmosphere which prevails in the school, and the courtesy which pupils generally display towards their teachers and other adults. The School Charter provides the initial focus for moral development with its emphasis on personal responsibility, which is reinforced through many aspects of school life. This is also implicit in the code of conduct for pupils, which is currently under review by the school council. Teachers are good role models, as are sixth form students for younger pupils. The strong programme of PSHE also plays an important role in promoting moral development and pupils feel that the issues covered are useful to them. These include bullying, crime, substance abuse and aspects of citizenship including political democracy. Sex education is taught promoting personal responsibility. Provision for moral development is also strong through many of the subjects. Opportunities are provided in English for pupils to explore moral issues, for example, the motives for Macbeth's actions. Moral issues pervade the history curriculum. In religious education the course taught in Years 10 and 11 deals with the response of religion to a range of moral and social issues. Geography investigates humanity's impact on the environment and explores some of moral issues emerging from a comparison of the developed and developing nations.

58. Provision for pupils' social development is also excellent. It has considerably improved since the previous inspection and is again evident in the maturity, ease and confidence displayed by the vast majority of, particularly, older pupils and sixth form students. Whilst the school is extremely firm in its stand on conformity to school rules concerning, for example, school uniform, it does nevertheless provide substantial opportunity for pupils to take real responsibility and demonstrate initiative. The school council's voice is listened to by the headteacher and governors, and its efforts on behalf of pupils have led to improvements such as the provision of basketball facilities in the playgrounds and the creation of an atrium for use in inclement weather. Other opportunities for responsibility for all years include form and games captains. Older pupils act as prefects and are expected to apply and be interviewed for these position. Year 10 pupils administer the commendation system and some are trained to act as librarians. Pupils make substantial and frequent contributions to a range of local and national charities through extensive fundraising activity. Year 11 pupils are provided with the opportunity to attend a formal social function. Opportunities for social development are also provided extensively through the subjects. These are not restricted to the wide variety of opportunities to work co-operatively and collaboratively, which are provided. In English, texts are chosen which allow pupils to broaden their experiences by focussing on disability and disadvantage. Boys and girls are encouraged to work alongside each other from Year 7 in their religious education lessons, so that the segregation which often naturally occurs in classrooms in some schools does not exist. In history, good opportunities for group work result in a mature approach. Fair play and respect for rules are strongly encouraged in physical education, and in mathematics pupils respond well to their teachers' expectations by respecting each others' contributions to lessons.

59. Provision for cultural development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good, although the school is aware and anxious that it could still do more to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in drama and have more direct experience of cultural and ethnic diversity. Staffing difficulties in previous years have meant that opportunities to take part in extra-curricular drama are still developing

and are currently restricted to younger pupils. Opportunities to sing and learn to play musical instruments have also improved and there is now a thriving variety of ensembles. There is some participation in local musical events and there are school performances to which the public is invited. Pupils also have the opportunity to experience a variety of musical traditions, including extra-curricular music through playing in a samba band. In English the provision for pupils to experience a wide variety of texts from different cultures is good. Religious education provides pupils with an understanding of, and teaches respect for, the beliefs and practices of the major world faiths. Different traditions are represented in the dance curriculum in physical education. Many areas of school life, from subjects such as art, music and modern foreign languages, to the school caterers were able to contribute to a European language day. Pupils are represented on the embryonic European council organised by the local authority. There is a very wide range of extra curricular activities available for pupils at lunchtime and after school and opportunities to take part in sporting activity are extensive, for example, through a programme of inter-form competition and through clubs and teams.

Sixth form

60. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory. The school has successfully implemented the changes of Curriculum 2000 to meet the students' interests and aspirations by providing a good range of traditional advanced level subjects. The curriculum meets the requirements of the examination boards and is responsive to the local circumstances where competition with grammar schools and parents' wishes predetermine the academic focus. However, with the exception of advanced vocational health and social care in Year 13, there are no other advanced vocational courses. These would provide a better match to the aptitudes and abilities of some current students.

61. Since its inception in 1996 with five students, the sixth form has grown steadily to its current size of 119 students, almost equally balanced between boys and girls. The success of this initiative in a secondary modern school is exceptional. About a third of the Year 11 pupils and two from another school decided to continue their education beyond the age of 16 at Wellington School in September 2001. Students receive appropriate guidance about the subjects but some are allowed to start the course with relatively low grades or without having taken higher tier examinations at GCSE. This is especially so in French and mathematics. Nevertheless, course completion rates are very high and 100 per cent in many subjects. In 2001, 62 per cent of leavers moved into higher education and the remainder found gainful employment or training.

62. Time allocations match the requirements of the new specifications and class sizes are viable and sufficient for meaningful debate and the effective sharing of ideas. A very good feature of the sixth form provision is the balance between taught time and private study. Students have the equivalent of a day each week of private study during which they must work independently in the study centre. This work is supervised and monitored and help and guidance are always available. It has a huge impact on their personal development and learning skills.

63. Key skills are developed and in Year 12 students concentrate on communication and take this to level three. In Year 13, the application of number and ICT are included in the timetable and taught to level two.

64. The enrichment programme is excellent. It is firmly established and compulsory for all students. They prepare for the curriculum enrichment certificate accredited by the Open College of the North West. Recent presentations were highly commended by the chief examiner. The school meets the statutory requirements to provide religious education according to the local Agreed Syllabus, and students have one lesson each week that is taught by specialist staff. Two lessons were sampled during the inspection. The students responded well to good teaching and reached high standards, for example, when discussing ethical issues of medicine in relation to Buddhist beliefs. The school provides a wide range of sports and games for the students. Specialist staff teach these activities and the participation rate is very high. All students take general studies for one lesson each week and all have been entered for the examination. Many failed to obtain a grade in the former A-level examination and there was considerable underachievement. In the new AS examination the results and achievement have improved. The school has identified the need to improve the teaching and learning of this course. In a good lesson during the inspection students researched and debated the issue of the Elgin Marbles.

65. Departments have developed new schemes of work to meet the requirements of the new specifications. Curriculum planning is at least good and very good in some subjects enabling the students to progress well, building on their GCSE work.

66. Very positive links exist between the school and universities, particularly local ones. Edge Hill, Manchester Metropolitan, Bangor and Keele have all been used for sixth form induction courses. Students are given helpful information at university open days. There is good two way response to Year 12 industry days when local businesses and higher education establishments are represented. Students' work placements help to forge positive links. As well as working in local businesses, students find work, for example, with the police, with old people's homes and with day nurseries

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

67. Standards of pastoral care, which were deemed good at the time of the last inspection, are now very good. The induction and pastoral guidance given to Year 7 pupils is outstanding enabling them to settle in quickly and happily. It is reinforced by a very well planned tutorial programme which tackles concerns pupils may have, raises their self-esteem and firmly sets the ethos and work ethic of the school. All years have carefully structured tutorial material and, in most cases observed, the time was very well used. Teachers know their pupils well. A good example of the friendly, family atmosphere created was seen in a tutorial when the head of year popped in to wish a pupil a happy birthday. Good team work with committed and effective heads of year, curriculum coordinators, subject teachers and form tutors ensures that pupils are given praise, support and advice. Pupils are given the confidence to achieve and teachers willingly give extra time to assist them. Theoretically pupils keep the same tutor and year head from Years 7 to 11, but promotions and the recent high teacher turnover does affect the continuity for many pupils. The PSHE programme is well planned, boosts pupils' self esteem and ensures they are given the guidance so vital to young adolescents. Personal development is very well catered for and carefully tracked both formally and informally.

68. The pupils with special educational needs who have full educational statements receive particularly good support from the LEA Learning Support Service teachers. They monitor pupils' progress assiduously and develop ongoing work from the individual education plans and assessments of the pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs but who do not have full statements receive the care which is characteristic of the school, although they do not receive the extra high quality supportive help identified above.

69. There are very good procedures, sensitively enforced, to ensure the protection of children. There is no hesitation in seeking help from outside agencies whenever any concerns arise. The school nurse runs a well used weekly drop-in centre for pupils with problems. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are rigorous. Risk assessment is regularly carried out. The school subscribes to a professional helpline which it finds very useful. First aid is well catered for with even the smallest incident recorded. Fire drill takes place termly with practices for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 early in September to ensure they are well aware of the procedures.

70. The behaviour policy is very effective. Imaginative rewards prove a valuable incentive to pupils to attend regularly and behave well. PSHE reinforces good attitudes and behaviour and teaches the need for mutual tolerance and respect. Bullying is not tolerated, and school rules are strictly enforced. Permanent exclusions are rare.

71. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Unexplained absences are quickly picked up and parents are telephoned on the first day. The Education Welfare Officer visits the school weekly and follows up the reasons for absence of a number of targeted pupils. Latecomers must sign in, which enables patterns of poor punctuality easily to be tracked.

72. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good and their progress is very well monitored. The effectiveness of the system is well illustrated by the pupils' achievements by the time that they reach the age of 16. The major strength of the system lies in the role of the curriculum coordinators, and the school's analysis and use of assessment information. Curriculum coordinators remain with their year group throughout the five years of their school career and work in partnership with the heads of year. Baseline assessment data is comprehensive and used effectively to ensure

appropriate grouping arrangements, and pupils are then set targets. These motivate pupils to do well, but as yet there is some inconsistency among subjects in the extent to which the targets are directly related to National Curriculum levels. Thereafter, assessment is used well to rigorously monitor progress within the subject departments, with the curriculum coordinators intervening at an early stage if subject teachers or assessment information from across the pupil's range of subjects indicates a cause for concern.

73. Strengths in individual subjects include music, where pupils are able to reflect on progress in discussion with the teacher. In French, rigorous assessment is used to push up standards, and in history, where assessment is an integral part of lessons, pupils are aware of National Curriculum levels and information is used to inform lesson planning. It is unsatisfactory in information technology where pupils' attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels in the subject is not currently assessed.

74. The system is particularly strong in the two years leading up to the GCSE examination. The school is rigorous in its use of YELLIS, a national data gathering and analysis system, which provides reliable predictions about pupils' performance in the GCSE. This is used together with other means of predicting performance such as the results of National Foundation for Educational Research tests taken at the age of 11. A target group of pupils who are thought to be underachieving are identified and receive additional support from teacher mentors. Analysis of GCSE performance is generally good and used to guide future planning. In some cases this is very good. For example, thorough analysis of the results of each of the seven teaching groups in religious education highlighted underachievement in particular groups of boys, and has led to the development of appropriate strategies for improvement.

Sixth form

Assessment

75. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and monitoring their progress through the sixth form are good. An initial "settlement" assessment takes place at an early stage and thereafter at regular intervals. Individual students' progress is monitored across the range of their chosen subjects by form tutors and the head of sixth form, and individually by the subject teacher. This ensures that underachievement is quickly picked up and measures taken to enable the student to improve. For example, the student and parents may enter into a contract for improvement with the school. Students play a part in the process through self-assessment. Interim reports are provided on attainment and progress as part of whole school assessment procedures.

76. Whilst procedures for monitoring progress centrally are effective, there is some inconsistency in the quality of assessment procedures and the use of assessment information among the subjects. In most subjects it is good. English is particularly strong with excellent support procedures including action planning tutorials which result in a comprehensive picture of all aspects of the students' performance being provided to parents. On the other hand, procedures in ICT are unsatisfactory.

Advice, support and guidance

77. As in the main school, the pastoral support given to sixth formers, and the arrangements to ensure their health and safety, are very good. Students have a range of sympathetic listeners from specialist sixth form staff to subject teachers. Some students even said they would take personal problems to pastoral staff they knew and trusted in the main school. All staff are accessible and willing to help as best they can. The two day sixth form induction, which both Years 12 and 13 attend, takes place at a local university. This gives students a flavour of university life, an indication of the degree of commitment expected of them in a sixth form, and what universities look for from applicants. It also helps them to get to know each other socially.

78. Students appreciate the information and advice they receive. Careers guidance involves the local authority careers partnership, the school careers co-ordinator, the head of sixth form and sixth form tutors. All Year 12 go on a weekly work placement for half a term. This establishes good links with a range of employers and gives students an insight into some areas in which they might wish to work. Students are encouraged to go to university open days and find out about the courses available to them. The school hosts an annual industry day when employers come to give advice and presentations.

Representatives from local universities also attend. Students are helped and encouraged when writing personal statements and making U.C.A.S. applications.

79. When responding to their questionnaire, a significant minority of students felt the careers advice was inadequate. These were mainly students who did not wish to proceed to higher education. Inspectors felt that although the main thrust of the sixth form is to encourage students into higher education, if students felt it was not for them, plenty of support and advice are available.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

80. The school is massively oversubscribed. Parents are pleased to get their children admitted and are overwhelmingly supportive of its ethos and its educational provision. 100 per cent of the respondents to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt the leadership of the school was good, pupils were made to work hard and they made good progress. Almost all agreed the teaching was good and pupils became mature and responsible young people. Parents were extremely satisfied with all the aspects covered. Sixth form students were also very positive in their views. There were two areas where a significant minority were dissatisfied. Careers education has been dealt with elsewhere and is good. Some were unhappy with the extra-curricular/enrichment provision but inspectors disagreed with this, finding the sixth form enrichment programme to be excellent.

81. Every effort is made to inform and involve parents at every stage in pupils' and students' school careers. The Years 6/7 induction programme is outstanding and includes a parents' guide on how to cope with secondary school. Teachers are readily accessible to parents and helpful in dealing with any concerns. Good quality information is routinely sent to parents who are always contacted about particular strengths and weaknesses. Consultation evenings are very well attended and staff build up good relationships with parents. Year 9 parents are thoroughly informed and advised about pupils' choices of study in Years 10 and 11. Planners are well used as a method of communication and are regularly checked by form tutors. Parents are asked to support children's homework and check that it is done. Newsletters have a lively format giving news from the various departments and listing forthcoming events. Sixth formers produce their own newsletter which is circulated to parents. Parents of these students are at least as supportive as those lower down the school.

82. Interim reports on pupils' and students' progress are provided for parents at regular interval during the year and the parents are pleased with the information they receive. Reports to parents are impressive documents, which provide a wealth of information on the whole range of pupils' achievements in school as well as the academic, and provide pupils with the opportunity to set general targets for themselves. However, only a minority of subjects, for example, English and modern foreign languages, provide clear information on what pupils know, understand, and their progress in developing the skills of the subject.

83. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept informed about their children's progress. The day-to-day contact which is characteristic of most schools is difficult to achieve because the SENCO is also an assistant headteacher who cannot be expected to focus his attention on these particular pupils and respond to immediate needs and concerns as they arise. No parental involvement in the education and care of pupils with special educational needs was seen during the inspection.

84. There is an active parent/staff association which runs well supported fund raising and social events. Last year they managed to raise over £5,000 to provide extra facilities and resources. They have bought, for example, a mini-bus, sports kit and staging for the hall.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The overall leadership and management of the school are outstanding. As a result, there is a very strong community ethos and an equally clear sense of purpose and direction in the school which permeates its day-to-day practice. The school has a singular aim – 'excellence in everything' – which is reflected in its achievements. It is evident in documentation and underpins the daily life of the school and its priorities for further improvement. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are in no doubt about the determination to establish and sustain the highest standards of learning, achievement and personal

development. High expectations of effort and behaviour are set within a framework of excellent relationships and discipline, and have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and response to school. These consistently high expectations are set, monitored and driven by the leadership of the school.

86. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Statutory responsibilities are well met, although there is need to ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a design and technology course, and that the improved arrangements for a daily act of collective worship are implemented more consistently. Governors are highly committed to the school's well-being and have contributed much time and hard work in securing it. Through their clear committee structure and appropriate programme of meetings, governors are very well informed and provide outstanding support for the school. They have very strong and productive links with the headteacher and senior management team, and monitor school performance effectively. They play a major part in determining and supporting priorities for school development, and in overseeing financial processes. They are well-informed about the target-setting process and how added value can be assessed, enabling them to monitor critically the school's performance.

87. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding, and is a substantive reason for the current success of Wellington School. He has a clear vision for its future, a vision in which little other than excellence and the successful achievement of individual potential will be accepted. The remarkable improvement in the school's performance coincides with, and to a very large extent results from, his appointment as headteacher six years ago. Fundamental to this improvement has been the unswerving intention to raise standards in teaching and learning. Systems for monitoring and evaluating these, together with the wide use of data relating to pupils' previous attainment and target setting for improvement, have been keystones in this process. The headteacher has very high expectations and ambitions for both pupils and staff, and governors have readily endorsed these. Very good management systems and communications have been put in place, and a dynamic agenda for improvement established. The headteacher is very well supported by a committed and hardworking senior management team whose complementary skills and expertise are used effectively. The headteacher and senior team work very well together to provide consistent leadership and expectation for the school. The senior team is playing a very positive part in promoting the initiatives that have been put in place since the previous inspection, for example, the regular subject reviews of teaching and learning. Their management roles are explicit and inter-related, and responsibilities for regular performance review with subjects are well carried out. Relationships between management and subjects are strong, and this has resulted in an exceptional unity of purpose and drive to improve across the whole school community.

88. The school experienced some difficulty in 2001 when the coordinator for special educational needs left and could not be replaced with someone of appropriate quality. The school decided that for one year an assistant headteacher should fulfil the role of SENCO and develop a whole-school strategy for the provision of these particular pupils prior to appointing a specialist coordinator. This is happening, but at present there is a lack of specialist expertise. Pupils with special educational needs are generally making good progress at present, but the issue needs to be dealt with urgently so that this can be maintained.

89. Support for pupils' academic and personal development is very well managed through an integrated system of form tutors under the guidance of a head of year and a curriculum coordinator who work very closely together. As a result, the pastoral and academic roles of tutors are linked well. The arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development are very good, as are links with parents. Subjects are very well organised and managed. Subject heads are generally very effective, and are increasingly taking responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. There is a growing rigour and consistency across the school in, for example, the observation and review of lessons, and in sampling pupils' written work and homework to check on progress and standards.

90. This is an efficient school. The cost of educating a pupil in this school is well below the national average but the budget is well in balance. Funds are generally spent wisely and on their intended purpose; however, the particular funds intended for the education of pupils with special educational needs for the previous year were unspent.

91. The governors are very effectively involved in the financial management of the school and work very well with the finance officer. When making major purchases and placing important contracts, the school always seeks best value. For example, the contract for the catering arrangements was only placed after

eight months of careful negotiation. The site management team manages the school's cleaning contract, again saving considerable sums of money.

92. Overall, the school is well staffed and has achieved both *Investor In People* and *Charter Mark* awards. Recent shortages of teachers of mathematics and science have caused some difficulties but new appointments have been made with effect from September, 2002.

93. The teaching force is well qualified and trained and teachers are committed to providing a high quality of education. Newly qualified teachers experience a very good programme of induction which enables them to settle smoothly into the school. The complement of technical and administrative support staff works effectively with the teachers.

94. The accommodation is very good. It is very clean, bright and welcoming and the pupils say that they enjoy working in the school's pleasant environment. Classrooms are spacious and walls are decorated with interesting displays of pupils' work. A large sum, £4 million, has been spent on improving and extending the teaching accommodation. The school has a further £600 000 earmarked for spending on new science laboratories, a preparation room, and an all-weather games pitch. However, there is no base for special educational needs learning support.

95. The condition of the accommodation is excellent. The site manager and his team enthusiastically maintain, repair, decorate and alter the building to meet the decisions and wishes of the governors and staff. Since the previous inspection notable improvement has taken place in the quality and range of the accommodation provided by the school.

96. The resources for learning are good overall. The computer facilities are very good and textbook and other resources for subjects are more than adequate. The learning resource centre, which is very attractive and well managed and which has been completely refurbished by the site management team, has an adequate stock of reference works which is complemented by CD-ROM facilities, such as encyclopaedias, and access to the Internet for research. However, the centre is short of fiction for young pupils and the provision of books for slower readers is especially inadequate. Nevertheless, funds for the library have recently increased and the centre manager has a strategic plan which shows that improvements to the bookstock are intended to take place over the short to medium term.

97. Taking into account the pupils' achievement, their attitudes and personal development, the quality of education that the school provides, its funding, and the local context in which the school operates, the school is very effective and gives very good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

98. The sixth form is very well led and effectively managed. Since its recent introduction in 1996, there has been clear emphasis on developing an academic sixth form which is a reflection of the school's established aims and values. A strength of the emerging sixth form ethos is the strong focus on study and the importance of service to the school as a whole and its community. These features acknowledge that the sixth form is an integral part of a successful, thriving school rather than a separate, isolated entity.

99. The governing body has fulfilled its role in holding the school to account by maintaining a good understanding of sixth form issues and needs, and responding to them in strong support of the school's management. Financial implications have been very carefully taken into account when sixth form development planning has been undertaken, and main priorities for progress have been funded carefully. Governors have been fully engaged in the strategic planning for the sixth form, including ensuring that the statutory requirement for religious education is met.

100. The sixth form management and tutorial team are conscientious and effective. They are thorough in ensuring that the needs of students are met, and make regular contact to check on their day-to-day progress. This attention to detail and need is part of their daily practice, and is also well illustrated in the successful arrangements for supervised and resourced private study, and in the excellent provision for

enrichment including key skills, careers and personal development.

101. The school's intention to improve and develop the sixth form provision is highlighted by the separate identification of needs and development ideas in a sixth form development plan. Properly, there has been strong, initial emphasis on the structural foundations of the sixth form, for example, in the courses provided and the support for students' study skills. There is now need to focus more sharply on raising standards by rigorously analysing results to check progress and monitor the performance of both students and subjects. This work is featured for future action in the current development plan, but would benefit from acceleration.

102. Subject leadership in the sixth form is generally good, and is very good in English. Organisation and administration are well carried out, but generally in subjects and across the sixth form there is insufficient monitoring of subject performance. Examination results are reviewed each year, but the analysis of data relating to setting targets for predicted student outcomes based on their previous GCSE scores is not yet used rigorously enough in this process. Monitoring and support of teaching and the sharing of good practice are part of the work of the best-led departments. It is an aspect that requires a more universal application in the drive to raise standards further.

Resources

103. Staffing provision in the sixth form is well matched to the demands of the curriculum currently on offer. Teaching, social and study facilities are very good, and the use of the learning resource centre and sixth form study areas is very well monitored. Resources for learning across the sixth form are good, including the very good provision for ICT, and are used well by sixth form students for independent research and study.

104. Funding arrangements for the sixth form are very good and costs are balanced in relation to the whole school. As a result, the sixth form is financially efficient. In its short history, the sixth form has very successfully attracted an increasing percentage of post-16 students from the main school, and more recently some from elsewhere. Very few have left before completing their courses, and the school's vision of equality of opportunity, access and inclusion is strongly practised in the daily life of the sixth form. More than six out of every ten students go on to higher education and the remainder either seek or take up employment. Examination results have been well below average, but represent satisfactory student achievement. Current students are achieving well, and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. Given the costs, the good quality of teaching, the improving student achievement and the quality of relationships and experiences, the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form provision is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. The school has few weaknesses. However, in order to maintain its momentum of continuous improvement and raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- *
 - (1) improve pupils' attainment and progress in ICT in Years 7-11 by:
 - developing teaching styles which enable pupils to become independent learners;
 - improving assessment procedures so that pupils' work is regularly marked and monitored, with targets set for their improvement.
 - (2) improve provision for design and technology by:
 - ensuring that the statutory requirements for the subject are properly fulfilled in Years 10 and 11.
- *
 - (3) improve provision for special educational needs by:
 - appointing, at the earliest opportunity, a specialist coordinator to lead and direct this aspect of school life;
 - reviewing the level of support and resources required.

Sixth form

- *
 - (1) raise the performance of students by:
 - establishing a sharper focus on monitoring and tracking academic progress;
 - setting targets for academic improvement for both individual students, and for subjects;
 - ensuring an appropriate match of course provision to both student aspirations and aptitudes;
 - considering the development of a continuum of curriculum experience for pupils aged 14-19 which embraces both academic and vocational opportunities.

In addition to the key issues, the following should be considered:

- improving the consistency of the school's vastly improved arrangements for a daily act of collective worship.

* These issues are featured in the school's current development planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	131
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	3	28	55	45	0	0	0
Percentage	2	22	42	34	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	2	5	32	13	0	0	0
Percentage	4	10	62	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1101	119
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	81	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	-
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	173	-

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	24

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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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	111	112	223

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	75	85	86
	Girls	92	84	83
	Total	167	169	169
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (70)	76 (73)	76 (66)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (26)	41 (43)	31 (18)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	90	89
	Girls	84	91	84
	Total	161	181	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (77)	82 (71)	78 (58)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (29)	49 (33)	24 (18)
	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	97	105	202

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	92	97
	Girls	66	102	104
	Total	109	194	201
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (48)	96 (96)	100 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46 (41)
	National	39 (38)

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	33	16	49

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	33	16	49
	Average point score per candidate	7.6	11.4	8.7
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	33	14	47	-	2	2
	Average point score per candidate	7.4	9.8	8.2	-	18	18
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	-	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	4
Indian	-
Pakistani	16
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	6
White	1148
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	108	1
Other minority ethnic groups	3	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

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

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	22.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3325283
Total expenditure	3220146
Expenditure per pupil	2725
Balance brought forward from previous year	352835
Balance carried forward to next year	457972

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	30
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	-
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	-

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1100
Number of questionnaires returned	168

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	41	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	45	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	54	10	3	0
The teaching is good.	61	38	0.5	0	0.5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	38	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	32	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	15	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	44	4	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	72	29	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	40	0.5	0.5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	38	2.5	0	2.5

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Improved results in national examinations in Year 9 and 11.
- Consistently good teaching.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good curriculum provision and schemes of work.
- Very good marking and good overall assessment.

Areas for improvement

Continue to raise standards by:

- Setting more challenging attainment targets.
- Tracking the pupils' progress towards attainment targets more closely.
- Spreading the best practice in the department.

106. In the 2001 national tests in English the pupils' results were above average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools. These results improved upon the average results of the previous two years. The proportions at level 5+ and level 6+ were each above the average for all schools and well above the average for similar schools. The proportion reaching the higher level 6+ has more than doubled since 1999. Overall the 2001 results represented good achievement.

107. In the 2001 GCSE examination the proportion attaining grade A*-C was above average for all schools and well above average for similar schools. There were significantly more grades at C or higher than expected, given the pupils' test results at the end of Year 9. However, girls did better, and the difference between the proportion of girls and boys attaining grades A*-C was greater than in most schools. Results at A*-C have increased by more than ten per cent over the last three years. In English literature the proportion gaining grades A*-C was well above the national average, even though the school enters more pupils than most schools, and there was no significant difference in the relative performance of boys and girls. The overall performance in English and English literature shows very good achievement in relation to the pupils' previous standards, particularly in view of the school's above average entry rate for both courses.

108. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average, matching those of the 2001 test. About four out of ten pupils are on target to reach the higher levels. They write with a high degree of accuracy and use an engaging variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Their response to a recent 'mock' test paper showed well above average standards of reading comprehension skills. In discussion they are fluent and articulate. The school's middle attaining pupils are average overall. Their writing is well organised and they make good progress in the clarity of their factual and explanatory writing. Their reading and speaking tend to be stronger than their writing as their understanding and recall of the issues in 'Macbeth' demonstrated. Some are inconsistent in the correct use of punctuation and clear and appropriate expression: this stops them reaching the expected level. About a quarter of the pupils are below average because of persistent flaws in the accuracy of their writing. Nevertheless, they have made good progress in the presentation and organisation of their writing and hardly any are well below average overall.

109. In Year 11 standards are above average, matching those of the 2001 GCSE examination. In literature, course work shows the overall standard to be well above average. The overwhelming majority of pupils have made great progress in using quotations and explanatory comments about a range of texts. Higher attaining pupils have very high standards. When writing about texts, such as 'Jane Eyre' or 'Macbeth', they make detailed evaluative comments about the impact of language and imagery on meaning. In addition, they have the highest standards of accuracy, and their style and expression add to the reader's enjoyment. These pupils are highly articulate. Middle attaining pupils organise their writing well and many are on target to achieve a C grade. Some, however, have weaknesses in the use of

appropriate expression or are prone to lapses in spelling and punctuation which undermine their standards. Their knowledge of their texts is good; they also speak with a fluency that is above average. A further proportion of pupils are below average and in a few cases well below average. Their writing tends to lack organisation and they make mistakes more frequently. Nevertheless, very good teaching means they make very good progress in literature and they have a firm grasp of the function of figures of speech.

110. Overall, the Year 11 pupils are achieving well. Although girls remain better than boys, the gap appears to be less than in the previous year's results because of improvements in the organisation and expression of some boys' writing. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and are on target to succeed in the examination. They benefit from the teachers effectively adapting learning materials to suit their needs. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 10 and 11 respond well to the opportunities presented by challenging texts and assignments. There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. Those at a more advanced stage are achieving well and a significant number are among the subject's highest attainers.

111. The overall standard of teaching and learning is good and often very good, especially in Years 10-11. The teachers' good subject expertise increases the pupils' knowledge and understanding of texts and their language skills. This specialist knowledge has a major impact on the pupils' success in literature. The teachers' expertise also includes understanding of what the pupils need to improve for test and examination success, ensuring the pupils are well prepared. The quality of marking is very good, and frequent use of learning targets help the pupils know how to improve. High expectations result in the pupils completing a lot of thoughtful work in a range of writing genres. Lessons are well-planned with a busy agenda of engaging activities – whole class, small group, pair, individual - that create a purposeful working atmosphere. Lessons are well-matched to learning needs. One high attaining group studied and analysed a Ted Hughes poem to build up a repertoire of features of descriptive writing. This aim was also effectively accomplished with a group of low attainers who compared the impact of a Penelope Lively passage with an edited version containing less imagery. As a result, the pupils understood the purpose of imagery at a much deeper level. Frequent, challenging homework effectively supports the pupils' progress.

112. Although teaching is good some aspects require development. Some lessons do not explicitly focus on learning objectives or relate activities to the objectives, so the point of the lessons is lost. Pupils have level targets in Years 7-9 but their awareness of them and what they mean is not secure. The targets are not reviewed often enough so improvement can be recognised and new targets set. The same points relate to GCSE grades in Years 10-11. Some lessons are not tightly scheduled so some tasks take longer than they need and learning is undermined.

113. The very good leadership of the head of department is a major factor in its success. Her high aspirations are shared by her very supportive team. Their involvement in additional lessons during both term and holidays confirms their commitment. The pupils benefit from the department's response to the National Literacy Strategy. Its impact is apparent in lessons from Years 7-11. The monitoring, evaluation and development of the teachers' work is very good for both experienced and less-experienced staff. The head of department reviews standards rigorously and effectively identifies areas for improvement. The department has made good progress since the previous report. Schemes of work are more precise and supportive and have led to more challenging teaching. Good links with the Learning Resource Centre manager enhance reading and study opportunities. Not enough use is made of prior attainment data in raising standards.

Literacy across the curriculum

114. The school's provision for the development of literacy is good. Although it does not have a formal literacy policy it is making an effective response to the National Literacy Strategy. It is making good provision to help Year 7 pupils' literacy through the Literacy Progress Units. English lessons in Year 7 follow the structure of the strategy.

115. A survey of the requirements of subjects has led to good progress in developing spelling, the use of key words and the use of writing frames to support explanatory writing. The literacy action plan group

provides good direction to the development of literacy. Some of the planned developments are innovative with departments planning starter activities to enhance the pupils' literacy in their subjects.

116. The recently-appointed manager of the Learning Resource Centre has considerable expertise in information literacy and is already effectively providing support in research skills. Pupils use the centre regularly at lunchtime and after school. The manager is not as yet a member of the literacy action planning group.

117. In individual subjects the provision is good. There are high expectations of writing in history with the use of dictionaries enhancing accuracy. Most subjects display and refer to key subject words frequently. For example, in science the displays are well-produced and referred to often. Science teachers correct spellings regularly. In geography there is a clear focus on literacy in the schemes of work. Engaging word games enhance the pupils' knowledge of technical vocabulary and pupils do a considerable amount of extended writing. Music documentation reveals thoughtful attention to supporting pupils' writing about a Hadyn symphony. In mathematics, a Year 11 higher attaining group benefited from the teacher's good and clear analysis of the language used in examination papers. In religious education there is a good focus on study skills. In French the emphasis on how language works enhances the pupils' understanding of grammar.

118. Good practice of this nature is a consistent feature of teaching. In ICT, however, there is not enough planned or actual emphasis on spelling through insufficient use of proofing and spell checking.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching.
- Standards of attainment and achievement are good.
- Very positive attitudes and relationships ensure that learning takes place in a purposeful atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- Develop consistent marking and grading procedures to include short-term pupil targets that are shared with the pupils.
- Employ a wider range of teaching strategies that include greater use of ICT to enrich and support learning.
- Develop a whole school approach to promoting numeracy skills across the curriculum.

119. Year 9 pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests has improved significantly since the last inspection and the upward trend in results is greater than that seen nationally. The 2001 national tests results are in line with the national average and, on the basis of the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. As in the national picture, there is usually little difference in the relative performance of boys and girls although, in the 2001 national tests, the girls performed slightly better than the boys. Pupils performed equally well in mathematics and science, but not quite as well as they did in English.

120. With very few exceptions, all Year 11 pupils enter GCSE examinations and in 2001 almost every pupil achieved a grade within the A*-G grade range. The 2001 GCSE results are above the national average for all schools, notably the proportion attaining grades A*-C which is almost eight per cent higher than nationally. Pupils achieve well, and results are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. As in the Year 9 national tests, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls, and both boys and girls attain similar results in mathematics as they do in their other subjects. Overall the department has made good progress towards meeting targets for both GCSE and National Curriculum tests.

121. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard in Years 7-9 is higher than indicated by the 2001 test results, reflecting more able pupils entering the school and the impact of the national numeracy strategy. The strategy is resulting in improved and evolving schemes of work, greater arithmetic competence and improvements in teaching styles. Consequently, standards of work by the end of Year 9

are now above the national average and indicate good levels of pupil achievement. All pupils cover similar topics at appropriate levels. The quality and quantity of written work promotes learning and reflects well on teachers and pupils. Lessons are suitably balanced between the necessary rehearsal of prior learning and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

122. Pupils sustain their good levels of achievement in Years 10 and 11 so that by the end of Year 11 their standards of work reflect most recent GCSE results. There is clear evidence of work being planned to promote continuity and progression and work is well matched to suit the needs of different groups of pupils. Teacher's expectations are mirrored in the high aspirations of the great majority of pupils.

123. In lessons there is no discernible difference in the attainment or involvement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with their peers and they are well integrated into the teaching groups. A strength of the provision in mathematics is the consistency of both teachers' expectation and pupils' attitudes between the various ability groups. For example, the degree to which standards are being maintained during a period in which about a half of the teaching is affected by temporary changes in staffing, reflects the solid nature of the previous provision and the work ethic that pervades all lessons.

124. In almost all lessons the very good behaviour and positive attitude displayed by the great majority of pupils are essential factors in generating a purposeful and working atmosphere in which learning can take place. The quality of presentation in exercise books indicates that most pupils take a pride in their work. When given the opportunity to work in pairs they do so in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Pupils are confident and secure with their teachers and because of the quality of the relationships most willingly take part during expositions. A feature of these exchanges is the due respect shown by pupils when one of their peers is either asking or answering questions.

125. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The overall quality ranges from satisfactory to very good and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. A significant proportion of lessons observed were taught by temporary, newly qualified teachers who, because they are mathematics specialists, are successful in maintaining the good levels of learning they inherited. Their teaching is satisfactorily building on secure foundations. As the teachers increasingly apply the methods of the national numeracy strategy, the scope for enhancing satisfactory lessons is correspondingly increasing. The use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is effective in promoting the understanding of functions and their graphs, but its use as a matter of routine for all pupils is not in place and provision is, therefore, inadequate.

126. Teaching and learning are very good in almost one in six lessons. In a very good Year 11 lesson on revising a whole range of algebra the teacher's high expectations, command of subject, and skilful questioning were matched by the enthusiasm and sustained concentration of the pupils. The result was a challenging pace and the quality of learning matched the quality of teaching. In another very good lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher's enthusiasm and use of a variety of stimulating techniques resulted in pupils confidently transforming formulae with understanding. In less successful lessons, which are well prepared and usually taught with clarity, there is insufficient dialogue during the introduction and the teacher then has to repeat explanations on an individual basis. Consequently there is a loss of pace, and opportunities to share incorrect responses and use them to correct common points of misunderstanding are missed. The quality of marking and assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent, particularly in relation to the grading of the work and its relationship with individual targets. Routine work is often not graded and consequently the tracking of progress relies too much upon informal arrangements. The degree to which pupils know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve, is therefore limited.

127. The teachers who teach mathematics are well led. Enthusiastic leadership provides a clear sense of direction with a capacity and commitment to succeed. Good quality classrooms and display, including the celebration of pupils' work, help to generate a mathematical ethos that supports learning. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have improved significantly and learning resources are now good.

Numeracy across the curriculum

128. At present there is no systematic and coordinated whole school approach to developing numeracy skills across the curriculum and individual departments do not have a strategy for promoting the use of numeracy skills. The school is adopting a positive approach to national numeracy initiatives and developments are in accordance with statutory requirements. A planned programme of awareness raising across the curriculum and provision for training is currently underway. The impact of the national numeracy strategy on standards of attainment in mathematics lessons is already in evidence because pupils' fluency with arithmetic and number work has improved. Although numeracy skills are not used in every subject, there are many illustrations of them being effectively used to enhance learning. In geography, for example, they make a good contribution and data handling skills are effectively used in constructing a range of statistical graphs that illuminate information. When working on spreadsheets and databases in ICT pupils competently apply the four rules of number and use simple formulae. In science pupils are able to carry out the necessary basic calculations when substituting values in formulae and can transpose formulae when appropriate. They construct good graphs to represent the results of experiments but are often reluctant to use specific numerical values to quantify comparisons. Measurement skills are competently used in design and technology but most experience difficulty when required to carry out conversions between units. In religious education, when researching religious beliefs and attitudes, pupils ably organise and interpret data they have represented in graphical form. Overall, pupils' numeracy skills make a positive contribution to their work across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Leadership in science is very good.
- The good standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9.
- The good progress made by pupils of all abilities.
- The good quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- The very good attitudes that pupils show towards their studies in science.

Areas for improvement

- The frequent, recent changes in staff.
- The lower attainment of boys in GCSE in Summer 2001.
- The inconsistent use of ICT across teaching groups.

129. The results in the 2001 national tests in science at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average for all schools, have improved since the last inspection, and are well above those for schools with a similar uptake of free school meals. There has been a continued significant improvement in the results over the past three years. Boys and girls perform equally well. Results are similar to mathematics but inferior to English.

130. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C in GCSE double science is close to that of all schools nationally. The results are above those of similar schools. Virtually all pupils achieved A*-G grades which is similar to what happens nationally. Girls did significantly better than boys. The results for the small number of pupils studying single subject science were below average. Results have improved over the past few years. Results in science were around the same as in English but slightly worse than mathematics.

131. Standards of work of Year 9 pupils are above average and represent good achievement for these pupils who enter the school with average levels of attainment in science. Standards in investigative science are above average. All pupils, whether high or low attainers, are competent in practical skills and grasp the main requirements of good investigation. Standards of work in the other attainment targets are also good. The higher attainers can remember scientific facts and can understand scientific concepts better than average attainers who are good at knowing facts, but for whom some concepts prove difficult. Low attainers find it difficult to remember some of the science knowledge they have been taught. There is a focus on improving literacy in the science department and the effects of this were seen by the correct spelling of scientific words. Most pupils showed that they could apply mathematics and carry out the calculations needed in their science lessons. Pupils at this stage are keenly interested in science, and

their positive attitudes ensure that they achieve well, despite some current shortcomings in the quality of teaching.

132. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress in their GCSE courses and achieve well. This progress is due to the careful teaching of the syllabus, the use of targets to encourage achievement and improved assessment. The standards of work of Year 11 pupils, as seen in lessons and exercise books, are good in each science attainment target. A new course and improved homework arrangements have been introduced and this has produced a rise in standards which is shown by the results of module tests. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of scientific formula and can process results of experiments efficiently. They also have a sound grasp of scientific concepts and processes. The teaching enables average and lower attaining pupils to remember scientific facts by carefully structured lessons with a focus on the knowledge to be learned and thorough reinforcement. Science investigation and practical work are good.

133. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils throughout the school. Boys are not achieving as well as girls in GCSE examinations due mainly to the poorer quality of their coursework. Teachers are making a conscious effort to ensure that this improves.

134. Behaviour is very good in science lessons for all year groups. Pupils are attentive in lessons, do not waste time and persevere at the tasks set. They co-operate well with each other in discussion, planning investigations and practical work. They have good relationships with their teachers and keep on task. Occasionally, where a class has a less experienced teacher in Years 7,8 and 9, the commitment to work is not quite so strong but behaviour is still good. There is a remarkably low incidence of missing or incomplete written work.

135. Teaching and learning are satisfactory for pupils in Years 7-9. No lessons are unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons teachers give clear instructions and explanations and they are good at drawing out answers from pupils through questioning. Practical work is carried out safely and well. For example, a series of short activities on sound was planned for pupils and they discussed in groups what their observations showed. They significantly enhanced their understanding of the physical characteristics of sound. Pupils' involvement in lessons, commented upon adversely in the last inspection, is now good. Targets are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and checked on at the end. There are often short revision sessions included in lessons and this is effective in consolidating learning. For example, in work on compounds and mixtures, a prepared sheet was used by the class to ask questions of two competitors creating excitement and interest. This quiz revealed that pupils had difficulty in associating chemical formulae with the compounds. The teacher then immediately provided a quick practical activity which revised this topic. Where lessons were less good it was the inexperience and lack of subject knowledge, outside their own specialisms, of the large number of new teachers who this year teach Years 7-9, which caused problems. They had less confidence and ease with the pupils and the variety of activities within the lesson was unbalanced. This all affects the pace and effectiveness of learning which nevertheless is still satisfactory due to the excellent attitudes pupils bring to lessons and the well structured scheme of work.

136. Teaching and learning in Years 10-11 are good. No lessons are unsatisfactory. Teachers are confident in their knowledge and understanding, always manage pupils well, set adequate homework and use time well. Targets for lessons are clearly stated and pupils' work in lessons is directed carefully towards achieving them. Marking standards are high. Practical work is well done. Investigations are now carried out well. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection. For example, pupils planned an experiment to find what factors affected transpiration from leaves. They worked well in discussion groups using a prompt sheet provided by the teacher to decide what might be possible factors and then devised a strategy and designed an experiment to investigate the effect of one of them. Teaching is also related to current issues and adapted to relate to pupils' experience. For example in a lesson on genetic inheritance the teacher focused on cystic fibrosis when she realised a pupil had a friend with this disease. The interest generated meant the pupils soon completed the work and could competently complete genetic diagrams to predict disease. Teaching in such areas is sensitive and helps pupils to consider moral and social questions associated with the issues involved. The few less satisfactory lessons were ones where concepts were not clearly explained, there was a lack of clarity in communicating what the experimental activity was designed to show or the pace at which work was covered was slow. Use of ICT is inconsistent but dataloggers are used to make observations. There has

been some improvement since the last inspection but more is needed.

137. Leadership and management of the department are very good. New courses have been introduced for all year groups which are more appropriate to their needs and will enable pupils to raise their achievement further. There is good assessment and targeting of pupils who need to improve. Teaching and written work are monitored well in a continuous drive to improve standards. However, there has been high staff turnover in the department and, although this has not adversely affected standards yet, the teaching of new and inexperienced teachers is not reaching the standards of more experienced staff. The department functions well on a day to day basis and the technical staff work well and efficiently to ensure its smooth running. Health and safety requirements are met, but concerns about the storage of chemicals have been reported to the school. Since the previous inspection the department has improved well.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' understanding of the key features of art and design.
- Pupils' understanding of relationships between technique and purpose in the work of artists and designers.
- Further development of work in three dimensions.

138. GCSE and GNVQ results in 2001 were above average compared with those in all schools. This continues a trend of improvement since the previous inspection. More pupils take GNVQ than take GCSE and results in the two examinations are broadly similar. In GCSE, girls' results were higher than boys'. Pupils mostly achieve well in art and design compared with their other subjects.

139. Pupils make consistently good progress between entering the school and their GCSE and GNVQ examinations, and their achievement is good in relation to their standards on entry both up to Year 9 and Year 11. In Year 9 overall standards are average but with several good aspects to pupils' work. In Year 11 overall standards are above average. Pupils make very good use of their sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 to develop their observational drawing and to explore alternative ideas. They are able to use a broad range of two and three-dimensional media effectively when developing their work and make particularly good use of colour and pattern. Pupils have a good knowledge of the work and lives of a range of artists and designers and use images of different styles in their own work. However, because pupils' study of key features such as line and texture is limited, they rarely use this knowledge to understand how the artist's intentions can lead to the use of particular techniques. Units of work which focus on a range of cultures, such as the Aztecs and African art, and consideration of the influence of art movements such as Art Nouveau enhance pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

140. In Years 10 and 11 pupils progressively develop a measure of independence in developing their work although this is more structured in the GNVQ course than in GCSE. They use a range of media including textiles, printmaking and clay. Although the majority of work is two-dimensional with some good use of relief, there are some good examples of pupils exploring three-dimensional form and space. Some pupils make sound use of computers to manipulate images and the best work in this field leads to imaginative compositions. Overall standards in Year 11 are quite consistent and there is little very weak work.

141. Both pupils with special educational needs and particularly talented pupils make good progress because the interpretation of topics during Years 7 to 9 is tailored to different groups of pupils and they receive thorough individual attention in all classes. Progress of different pupils is enhanced in Years 10

and 11 because the range of courses – GCSE and GNVQ both at Intermediate and Foundation level – enable them to study art and design at an appropriate level. Overall, boys and girls make broadly similar progress.

142. In most lessons there is an industrious working atmosphere. Pupils work hard and take care with their work. Many are keen to work at lunchtimes and after school. They co-operate well in group work and consult and respect each other's views. During Years 10 and 11 they progressively develop a greater independence and control over their work. The positive attitudes of pupils are a significant factor in the good progress that they make.

143. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers are enthusiastic and well organised. Classes are well managed and the pace of lessons is mostly good. Previous knowledge is reinforced well through good questioning and discussions. Expectations are generally high and are supported by thorough individual help. The high quality of marking of pupils' work is a significant factor in the progress that they make. The scheme of work is well planned with homework making a major contribution to the development of pupils' skills and knowledge. Some lessons focus too much on techniques and knowledge without linking these to purpose and understanding. Teachers make good provision for pupils to continue their work outside lessons.

144. The new head of department has made a very good start and put in place many strategies to improve standards. She is enthusiastic, has a clear, appropriate vision for the development of the subject and the organisational ability to turn the vision into reality. An effective scheme of work and very good assessment procedures, which include clear guidance for pupils, have been established. Teaching is thoroughly monitored and good support provided for the newly qualified teacher. The department has responded well to initiatives such as the European week in which, for instance, key words are displayed in French and German as well as English, and pupils produced paintings based on the work of a wide variety of European artists. All the issues raised at the previous inspection have been tackled well. Overall, the management of the subject is good as is the improvement made since the previous inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The standards at GCSE are above average.
- Pupils are diligent, hardworking and show enthusiasm for the subject.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and pupils are challenged.
- The marking, assessment and monitoring of pupils' work and progress is good.

Areas for improvement

- Not all pupils take a design and technology course in Years 10-11, as required.
- Increase the amount of time allocated for design and technology in Years 7-9.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and experience of metalworking and engineering techniques and processes in Years 7-11.

145. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school, as judged by the scrutiny of work of pupils in Year 7, is in line with standards nationally. However, when comparing the work of the present Year 7 with previous years, the standard has improved, particularly in food technology.

146. Teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that attainment is slightly higher than expected nationally. However, the ability range is narrow, with few gifted and talented pupils and few with very low attainment. A study of the work provided for scrutiny and the lessons seen confirms that standards are generally average in Years 7-9. However, work seen in a Year 9 textiles lesson where pupils were making a pair of shorts, and in a food lesson on the batch production of small cakes was very good. In both lessons, pupils showed care and precision, and an application and enthusiasm which was a pleasure to see. Folder work in all areas is of good quality. The folders are properly ordered and worksheets completed. Homework is regularly used and marked appropriately.

Some good pieces of extended writing were seen where pupils were asked to explain carefully how they had tackled the making of a product. Especially noteworthy was the extra time that pupils were willing to give to completing their work - the textiles room always seemed to be full at the end of school, and teachers should be congratulated on their commitment. However some instances were missed to research the link between technology and its implications for society. Progress across Years 7-9 is good in all areas of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs were often, but not always, identified in lessons. They are well-integrated and generally cope well with the tasks set, and some make especially good progress.

147. The 2001 GCSE results were above average. Pupils generally did better in design and technology than in their other GCSE subjects. They did especially well in Systems and Control but there is a consistency across all areas. The application of pupils, both in 'making' products and in completing their folders contributes to their success. Pupils understand the processes of designing, making and evaluation, and are good at expressing themselves. Writing frames are a considerable help as are the word walls in the classrooms. However, no teacher was heard to refer to them in any lesson seen. The strengths in the 'make' element were seen in a graphics lesson where pupils, mainly girls, were making a net in card for disposable cameras. Some of the graphics work for it, done on a computer, was of very high quality. Pupils in a 'Systems and Control' lesson had a good understanding of a mono and astable pulsed circuit and they used the crocodile clips computer program very well. However, the teacher had to skirt round a mathematical formula as many pupils would have had considerable difficulty converting microfarads into farads by dividing by one million. The folder work was of high quality with pupils taking a particular pride in their presentation. However, the designs lacked real constructional detail and technical terms were missing. The overall standard in all areas is average, including the work of pupils with special educational needs, although very high level work was not often seen. Much more use has been made of ICT, in positive response to one of the criticisms of the last report. There is little noticeable difference between the standards of work of boys and girls, although in some examination groups there is gender imbalance. Boys do particularly well compared to boys nationally.

148. Teaching and learning are good in all areas. Of the lessons seen approximately 90 per cent were at least good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The very positive attitude of the pupils contributed this quality as did the significant help given by the technicians. The strengths of the teaching are in the initial planning and the resources and exemplar materials. Teachers are very competent, although there was a lack of technical knowledge in one lesson seen. Their enthusiasm is conveyed to the pupils who respond well. The topics are chosen well and challenge all pupils. Little differentiation was seen but teachers are good at giving individual help and are always available after school and during breaks. There is some lack of 'ordinary' exemplar work. Some pupils lack inspiration when asked to design. The homework system is very efficiently organised. Pupils are effective learners. They come to lessons on time and are well prepared for work. They pay attention and put a lot of creative thought into their work. They discuss their work well in small groups and with a teacher individually, but a good proportion are reluctant to respond when asked for answers in a whole class situation. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour are very good. Lessons went on at a good pace, with very little interruption for inattention or poor behaviour.

149. In Years 7-9 pupils only spend six per cent of time on design and technology. This is below what is usual, and is insufficient to cover all the areas of design and technology adequately, particularly in metalworking and engineering. This lack of knowledge of engineering terms and processes inhibits pupils in Years 10-11 and beyond. Designs often include the bending, joining and machining of different metals and the complexity of some designs, especially when considering detailed construction, is affected. In Years 10-11 a proportion of pupils follow not do a design and technology course. These pupils have not been disapplied, and the school is not complying with statutory requirements.

150. In other respects, the department is managed very well, and improvement since the previous inspection is good. The assessment and monitoring are very good. The department is developing a good topic booklet approach, linked to National Curriculum levels. The department work together well and the handbook and other documents set out plans for development and the targeted financial implications.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching and learning enable the pupils to achieve well.
- GCSE examination results.
- Teachers use very good resources and techniques to enrich pupils' learning.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour secure good learning.

Areas for improvement

- To set individual target levels in Years 7 to 9 to check pupils' progress.
- Development of subject and class targets and make it clear how these will be achieved.

151. In 2001 the GCSE results were slightly above the national average. The proportion of A*-C grades has doubled since the previous report. Girls obtained higher results than boys, more so than the national trend. The proportion of the highest A*/A grades was higher than the national average. Overall, pupils obtained significantly higher grades in geography than expected in relation to their other results, and in relation to their standards at the start of the course. In these examinations geography was the most successful subject in the school.

152. The standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are above average. In relation to standards at the start of Year 7 they represent good achievement. This good progress is the result of good teaching and learning. Fieldwork is used in each year to enrich and extend pupils' learning. In Year 7 pupils with special educational needs make very good progress with the help of two classroom assistants. They use instruments to collect and record data about the weather in different locations around the school in their investigation into microclimates. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 draw accurate population pyramids of new towns. They analyse these to identify the implications of population growth in terms of education, land use, industry and transport. Their conclusions, in extended writing, show a detailed understanding and balanced view of the development of these towns. This work is above average, and extends their personal development in terms of social and moral education. Similar work of the lower attaining pupils is less analytical and their conclusions are brief. Nevertheless, the standards of their work are average. All pupils use ICT to gain information for their enquiries, handle data for example to produce climate graphs, and some word-process their work.

153. In Year 11 standards of work are average. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 10 because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Higher-attaining pupils describe and explain climate graphs of tropical rainforests in detail and account for the adaptations of the resulting vegetation. In human geography they demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the social, economic and environmental impact of industrial change in South Wales. In work on acid rain they develop their understanding of moral issues from a local to an international scale. The work of lower-attaining pupils is much less detailed. In work on rivers their hydrographs are untidy and they do not attempt to read them, though they have a basic knowledge of some of the factors that affect their shape.

154. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school and in line with that of other pupils.

155. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are interested in geography and work well in pairs or groups. Exercise books are neat and demonstrate pupils' pride in their work. These mature attitudes have a positive impact on standards. Units of work in every year provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of independent research, as in Year 8 in work on sustainable development in Kenya.

156. During the inspection teaching was consistently good, sometimes very good and one lesson was excellent. Taking into account the samples of work, the quality of learning and pupils' achievement, teaching is good overall. There is a very clear focus on both literacy and numeracy to improve pupils' powers of description, explanation and analysis. An excellent lesson on weather began with a game to review the meaning of key words. The teacher had high expectations and introduced Year 7 pupils to a knowledge and basic understanding of a synoptic chart of a depression. Such was the pace of the teaching and learning that by the end of the lesson pupils were beginning to present weather forecasts to the class with some accuracy. In lessons on the investigation of coastal processes in Swanage Bay, pupils followed very good guidance on standards as they redrafted their work to attain higher levels. The use of ordnance survey maps and photographs enabled the pupils to produce high quality information

leaflets. Occasionally teachers miss opportunities to respond in detail to pupils' questions. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject are consistently very good, but sometimes their explanations, for example, of choropleth maps are not clear and this is usually associated with untidy board work. Classroom management and very good relationships with pupils are very strong features of all lessons.

157. Leadership and management of the department are good and as a result improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Teaching and pupils' work are monitored and assessment data is being used to check pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11. The staff work very well as a team, share good practice and are committed to improving standards and results. Year and teaching group targets are not included in the development plan and it is not clear how they are going to be achieved. The department makes a very good contribution to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of global citizenship.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are above average.
- Standards in Year 7-9 are above average.
- Pupils achieve well in response to very good teaching.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Work is well matched to pupils' needs.

Areas for improvement

- Skills in historical interpretation require further development across the school.

158. In 2001 GCSE results at A*-C grades were above the national average, and in line at grades A*-G. Boys' results were similar to those of girls' and were well above the average for boys nationally. Year 9 teachers' assessments in 2001 indicate that attainment is above average, and this is confirmed by inspection findings.

159. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average across the school and pupils' achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school are good. In Years 7-9 lower attaining groups show good progress in their oral responses and written work. In a low ability class in Year 7, well matched material enabled the pupils to identify and use key words effectively. Higher attainers have developed the ability to organise and communicate their information coherently and reach judgements on their findings. The use of role play in a Year 8 lesson showed that the pupils had a clear understanding of events leading to the execution of Charles I, and were able to present their case for and against coherently and convincingly in a very structured way. In Year 9, written work on a technology project dealing with the changes in war strategies and weaponry and on the decision-making process behind the drawing up of the Treaty of Versailles shows that most pupils have progressed in the ability to identify the main issues, to interrelate their findings and assess their significance. The impressive level of knowledge showed that a number of pupils had researched through the website and used ICT programmes devised by one of the teachers. Lower attaining pupils produced a substantial amount of relevant detail but are less confident on the issues and their significance.

160. In Years 10-11 most pupils understand historical sources and have become more skilful in independent research. Some pupils in Year 11 showed good understanding of the escalation of events leading to the decision to send British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969, referring to the part played by the Civil Rights movement in America. Most pupils achieved good standards of disciplined writing as a result of very good teaching and working to a well structured writing frame. The departmental literacy policy and the provision of differentiated material underpin strategies for the raising of standards. This is a considerable improvement on the previous report.

161. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are known to all staff, identified in lesson plans and, since the last inspection, they have appropriate lesson materials suited to

their needs. The well structured materials and tasks also challenge the more able pupils, introducing them to writing frames that encourage skills in historical analysis as a basis, for example, for research on Louis Pasteur.

162. The attitude and behaviour of all the pupils are consistently very good. They work with interest in the subject, demonstrating a high level of commitment and concentration. They respond readily and confidently in answering questions and work effectively in groups. The strong emphasis on written work challenges pupils to produce work of high quality both in content and presentation.

163. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. The four main members of staff are specialist teachers, sharing their expertise and experience across the school and helped effectively by other experienced teachers. All teaching is well planned, well disciplined and challenging. Realistic objectives are supported by very comprehensive assessment data, enabling targets to be set at both National Curriculum and GCSE levels. Pupils perceive their own progress, and are encouraged to use ICT for independent research and presenting work. The high level of pupil participation contributes positively to their level of knowledge and understanding, acquired step by step in lessons. The preparation and use of well-matched material ensures that pupils have good access to the curriculum. Regular informative marking ensures that pupils know whether the progress expected of them has been achieved.

164. Leadership and management are very good, and there is a sharp focus on raising standards. The close monitoring of teaching and learning through assessment procedures and the performance management programme is used to promote good practice. The accommodation is excellent, providing a good learning environment which encourages positive attitudes, improving the level of performance and learning. All areas mentioned in the previous report have been tackled, including the improvement in resources and the availability of textbooks, which is an ongoing priority. Improvement since then has been very good. The department needs to persist in the developing of the skill of historical interpretation across the school, which in turn would improve outcomes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good specialist knowledge.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Learning resources and technician support are good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work.
- GCSE results.
- Assessment procedures.
- Opportunities for pupils to work at their own pace.

165. GCSE results in ICT in 2001 were below the national average for A*-C grades when compared to schools nationally, but were average when compared to similar schools. Pupils overall did better in their other subjects than they did in ICT. These GCSE results were an improvement on the 2000 results and a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when they were well below average.

166. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average. This is largely a result of the staffing difficulties the school experienced in the previous year when temporary and non-specialist teachers were employed. Pupils can create posters and flyers to advertise events using both words and pictures, and standards in design are good. For example, in Year 8 pupils know how to design a computer based system for a video shop. Pupils know how to construct a database and are able to produce simple graphs from spreadsheets. They know about the Internet and how to create a simple web page. Although they have good knowledge and understanding of the major applications, pupils are unable to produce quality pieces of work because they lack the basic skills to be able to work independently on open-ended tasks. Apart from the limited use of a Logo programme to control the movements of a simple object, knowledge and understanding of how computers are used to control the operation of many machines and everyday objects, is below average. Given their attainment on entry, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

167. By the end of Year 11 standards are still below average. Pupils taking the GCSE course have a reasonable fluency in basic operations, can use software packages for desktop publishing and understand the structures of databases and spreadsheets. Design analysis, in the form of identifying and detailing the tasks to be done before implementation, is below average because pupils lack the independent learning skills necessary to produce work of sufficient depth and originality and rely too much on teacher direction. Consequently, work produced by the higher attaining and middle attaining pupils is much of a muchness because individual pupils are not extended to the limit of their capability. Because pupils who do not have ICT lessons have very good access to computers at lunch times and after school and use ICT in other subjects, their standards overall are only slightly below those of pupils taking the GCSE course. Given their attainment at the end of Year 9, achievement is satisfactory for both groups.

168. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils. They are taught mainly in groups of similar prior attainment where teachers are aware of their needs from their individual education plans and plan work accordingly.

169. In timetabled lessons of ICT, the quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is satisfactory overall, with approximately four-fifths of lessons being judged satisfactory and one-fifth good. Where teaching is good, learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson, work is planned to enable pupils to learn from each other, and clear explanations and demonstrations enable pupils to gain a clear understanding of what is being taught. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are able to explain concepts clearly and imaginatively. Pupils are managed effectively so that they settle down to work quickly and little time is wasted establishing good order in the classroom. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. Pupils' work is not marked, graded or recorded frequently enough. As a result, pupils are not well informed about how well they are doing and so cannot set themselves targets for improvement. Teaching styles are too directive and do not encourage pupils to become independent learners; there are few opportunities for pupils to work at their own pace using self-

help resources when needing help with basic skills. Learning would be improved if teachers always had access to demonstration resources, such as a computer linked to a large screen.

170. Pupils come to lessons willing to work hard and do their best. They enjoy their work and behaviour is good. They listen to their teachers and endeavour to follow instructions. Pupils are polite and friendly and willing to talk about their work. They have a conscientious attitude to homework and very few pupils fail to complete it on time. Consequently they make satisfactory learning gains in both knowledge and understanding of ICT applications. However, learning is not as good as it could be because pupils have few opportunities to put these positive attitudes to effective use through working at their own pace.

171. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The three specialist teachers who, along with the head of department, form the department's team of teachers are very well qualified in ICT. They give very generously of their time, and the computer rooms are open at lunch times and after school for pupils to use the computers or consult with teachers. The monitoring of teaching in the department is good and there is a focus on raising standards overall. An excellent audit of cross-curricular provision of ICT in other subjects has been undertaken. The next step is to ensure that what is expected to be taught, is taught. Although the department has a policy of supporting literacy in ICT lessons, opportunities to use a spellchecker, for example, are rarely taken. The scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 lacks detail of how pupils are to be taught basic skills. Learning resources are good; the number of computers available for pupil use is slightly better than the national average. Technical support is good. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

Information and communication skills across the curriculum

172. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects are generally satisfactory and are good in history, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. This is very good improvement from the time of the previous inspection, although more use should be made in music and mathematics, and use is inconsistent in science. Pupils are developing a range of skills in communicating information using computers, including word processing and desktop publishing. When presenting data they are using spreadsheets and databases. The Internet is now widely used for research that often forms part of homework assignments. Very good use is made of ICT to support learning in physical education in Year 8. Pupils' projects – which they complete in ICT lessons – include using computers to set up a database of results from fitness activities, such as sprints and sit ups, and constructing bar charts and pie charts to illustrate bleep test results.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results and standards are above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Achievement is very good.
- Assessment is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provide opportunities to develop reading skills further.

French

173. GCSE results have risen very sharply in the past two years. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C rose to above average for the first time since the previous inspection. Pupils did better in French than in their other subjects, and the numbers achieving the higher A*/A grades doubled compared with the previous year. Girls outperformed boys, in line with the trend nationally, though boys performed better than boys nationally. Since 2000, all pupils in Year 11 have been entered for GCSE and the proportion achieving grades A*-G has been very high.

174. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average and are continuing to rise. They closely match teachers' assessments. Boys and girls achieve very well because attitudes, attendance, teaching and resources are all very good. Speaking and writing, which were very weak at the previous inspection, are now significant strengths. Pupils build up their knowledge of an increasing range of grammar structures and vocabulary, learning to use and link sentences successfully and to express opinions readily. In Year 9, high attaining pupils use different tenses and increasingly varied expressions to write lengthy factual and descriptive accounts with a high level of accuracy. They speak confidently and accurately in sentences with good pronunciation and can give a sustained oral presentation, for example, about a recent birthday celebration. Pupils in middle and lower attaining groups also speak in sentences and can write paragraphs using different tenses. Pupils develop comprehension skills well, picking out details from tapes and printed texts in the course materials. The reading development scheme currently being piloted in Year 9 now needs to be extended to all year groups so that pupils have regular opportunities to read independently and to comment on books of their own choosing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all the skills because teaching methods and materials are well adapted to their needs. Boys achieve at a similar rate to girls and develop speaking and listening skills particularly well. Pupils have good opportunities to use and develop ICT skills in their lessons.

175. Standards of work in Year 11 are above average and closely match recent GCSE results. Pupils learn at a good rate, increasing their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar structures and more complex expressions. They achieve particularly well in speaking and writing. The above average time allocation in Years 10 and 11 allows oral skills to be practised thoroughly, often through pair-work, and regular practice with the foreign language assistant also contributes to pupils' good pronunciation and confidence. High attaining pupils can discuss school rules and their ideas for an ideal school. In their writing they show a good command of different tenses and can, for example, compare and contrast different modes of transport, often including quite sophisticated reasons and opinions in their answers. Lower attaining pupils take part in role-plays and give oral presentations about family and friends. When they write about their life style and work experience for their coursework, boys tend to be less accurate than girls. All pupils are able to identify some information from tapes and printed texts, whilst more able pupils deal with much longer extracts and can often recognise different viewpoints and attitudes.

176. Very good attitudes contribute significantly to pupils' very good achievement in French. Pupils come prepared to work hard, they enjoy their lessons and behaviour is always very good. They work very co-operatively and purposefully in pairs and small groups. They take considerable pride in the presentation of their work and corrections are done regularly. They develop their independent learning skills well because they have a textbook to take home and they complete their homework. GCSE students attend after school classes. Younger pupils enjoy the lunchtime language club and there is good support for the annual visit to France.

177. The very good rate of pupils' progress is underpinned by consistently very good teaching in Years 11-16. Relationships and management of pupils are excellent. Teachers have very high expectations regarding pupils' level of achievement and pupils learn rapidly. Lessons are carefully timed, well sequenced and make good use of stimulating resources and a variety of activities which increase pupils' knowledge and give practice in each skill. Teachers speak French fluently and consistently, which encourages greater use of French by the pupils and develops their listening skills further. Marking and assessment are very good; pupils' progress is carefully tracked, targets are set and pupils have a clear indication of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers prepare pupils thoroughly for all aspects of the GCSE examination.

German

178. German has been introduced as a second language this year to high attaining pupils in Year 9. Standards are close to average and pupils are achieving very well in the very limited time because teaching is very good and attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They speak and write confidently in sentences about themselves and their leisure activities and they show good understanding of tapes and short texts.

179. Leadership and management of modern foreign languages are very good and have led to excellent improvement since the previous inspection. GCSE results and standards have risen at a much faster rate than nationally and the quality of teaching and learning has improved through rigorous formal monitoring, the appointment of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers and very good assessment practice. Teachers work as a very dedicated team and share a common commitment to raise standards even further. The accommodation and quality and level of resources are very good.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good GCSE examination results.
- Some very good teaching.
- Good resources and equipment.
- Very good extra-curricular provision.
- Excellent planning, organisation and use of assessment.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers for compositions in Years 7-9.

180. As a result of staff changes in a time of transition a single pupil entered for GCSE music in 2001 and gained grade A. This result compared well with the candidate's other subjects. GCSE music results in 2000 were above national averages with 75 per cent of pupils, (twelve out of sixteen), gaining grades A*-C, and all gaining at least grade G.

181. Achievement in appraising is, overall, better than in performing and composing. The department places emphasis on basic literacy and technical skills and this has a marked effect on attainment in listening and appraisal. When strong emphasis is placed on language skills, for example in Year 11, students improve their ability to use analytical and descriptive language and thereby increase their musical understanding. Most pupils make good progress in building on their performing and composing skills. In Year 11 pupils' compositions often display competence in work derived from a number of sources. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 successfully produce computer-generated composition and are conversant with a range of musical styles. Individual instrumental skills are often sound and well utilised in supporting composition. Overall, standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average.

182. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is near average. The standards achieved by pupils Years 7-9 are good overall when compared with their attainment on entry, which is below average. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is often good. At the end of Year 9 all pupils are able to use keyboards, voice and classroom instruments with some competence for performance and for basic composition. Pupils build on their vocal and instrumental skills. Singing is used well and attainment in singing is often at least average. Appraising skills are good; pupils develop a suitable musical vocabulary with which to describe and appraise successfully the music they hear.

183. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are satisfactory. In a Year 9 keyboard lesson pupils successfully matched melodic fragments to a chord sequence. In Years 10-11, teaching is very good with elements of excellent practice. For example, in a lesson on 18th century dance music, pupils' performance was closely linked to the development of listening skills. There are significant elements of good practice at all stages. Work is appropriately matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers' vocal, keyboard and other musical skills are used well in the classroom and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning; lessons often have a range of tasks and energetic pace. This helps to consolidate pupil learning and maintain interest. Homework is set and pupils' work is carefully assessed. Teaching embodies very thorough preparation, suitable teaching styles, an interesting range of work, good pace, and strong organisation. Pupils have opportunities to explore their own culture and value the opportunity to explore the music of other cultures, for example in the samba band. Such work helps pupils to broaden their understanding of World music. Music teachers support special educational needs pupils well and provide targets and music-specific education plans for all pupils. Good teaching together with suitable resources and planning ensure that many pupils make good progress across Years 7-11. Teachers ensure that, at all stages, pupils have opportunities to develop most necessary musical skills. Computer work, however, has modest use in Years 7-9 although computer expertise in the department is strong. The department has already noted opportunities for pupils to develop computer-generated composition as an area for development.

184. Instrumental teaching is often good. The number of pupils taking lessons in school is above average in relation to the size of the school. About 180 pupils have instrumental lessons each week. The seven visiting instrumental teachers make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and their work is meticulously managed and carefully integrated into the work of the department.

185. Pupils' attitudes in music lessons are good and they respond well to stimulating work. Their response is often attentive, with appropriate levels of interest, co-operation and behaviour. Pupils work well individually and with enthusiasm in instrumental groups. Pupils enjoy playing their compositions and respond well when listening to the performances of others.

186. Leadership of the department is excellent and has a strong impact on performance and extra-curricular work. The department has very strong organisation with many excellent administrative processes in place. Schemes of work are good. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are strong. Teachers carefully analyse attainment across the range of skills taught in music lessons and use this information to extend the work offered to pupils. There is thorough analysis of GCSE results. The overall use of assessment is directed towards the introduction of new strategies to develop pupil learning. The department has good equipment with suitable instrumental stocks and a small computer suite. Accommodation is suitable for most musical activities.

187. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activity in music. Many committed pupils are regularly involved across a range of music making. Pupils enthusiastically commit time and effort to the samba band, choirs, instrumental ensembles and other smaller groups. The performing and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated in the school and in the community, within a regular calendar of musical events. Pupils frequently perform in school events at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall and have opportunities to hear others perform. Such opportunities have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of pupils; they also contribute to the prevailing ethos of the school.

188. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress in response to teaching which is good overall, and very good in Years 7-9.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Specialist facilities are very good.
- Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Make more use of assessment data to improve standards.
- Increase the amount of time allocated to all GCSE classes to match more closely the provision made in most similar schools.

189. GCSE results for the year 2001 were below the national average for A*-C grades, though better than it for A*-G grades. Boys' results were much better than girls' and very close to the national average. Over recent years there had been a pattern of consistent improvement until the year 2000 which showed a downturn. The latest results were an improvement on that year and were a little above predicted targets for the subject. The characteristics of each year's group of pupils studying physical education for examinations have varied, and currently fewer candidates have the potential to gain higher grades on evidence drawn from previous standardised test scores. When this information is considered, the levels reached by pupils in GCSE examination show that most achieve well and this represents good added value.

190. Attainment on entry to the school is variable but generally below average in physical education. There is a wide range of levels of personal fitness, and evidence from base-line assessments carried out by the department in Year 7, indicate below expected levels of skill and co-ordination, especially for girls. By the end of Year 9 achievement is good and standards have been raised to above the national expectation for the majority of pupils, and especially for boys. Standards of personal physical fitness are above average and most pupils have a good understanding of how to improve and sustain the levels reached. Greatest progress is made in dance for girls, and in gymnastics for both girls and boys. In each year group there is clear improvement in sequence work and movement control, both over time and in individual lessons. For example, in dance in Year 9, most girls are well able to follow complex routines and sustain rhythm patterns accurately. Many can subsequently add to this by creating and extending sequences to produce work that is above average. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make considerable progress by the age of 14. This is undoubtedly as a consequence of the high standard of teaching and a most eager and positive approach to the subject by the pupils.

191. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 11, standards match national expectations and for some, mainly boys, they have been exceeded. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Boys do particularly well in games and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of tactics. The pace of progress is not quite so marked as in the earlier years though in Year 10, in a lesson on fitness, all worked with energy and enthusiasm to further develop their personal standards.

192. Throughout the school, most pupils and students display attitudes that are very positive and have clear impact on standards, both in lessons and in the popular and extensive range of extra-curricular sport and games. Almost all behave well and have a clear understanding of what their teachers expect of them in terms of behaviour and performance. They are all eager to do well especially, but not only, in the earlier Years 7, 8 and 9, and this is clearly demonstrated through their high levels of attendance and participation, and the high standards of personal kit.

193. Teaching is good throughout the school, and in Years 7-9 it is very good. This ensures that learning mirrors teaching and accounts for the marked pace of progress and improvement in their earlier years. The emphasis placed on improving on personal standards of fitness and on individual skills in gymnastics and dance, for example, is under-pinned by the time in lessons that teachers devote to improving pupils'

knowledge and understanding of what to do in order to improve. Clear links are made between individual learning targets and National Curriculum attainment level descriptions in language that the pupils and their parents understand. This is made possible because all teachers know the subject very well and have considerable ability in planning and managing activities that clearly and straightforwardly challenge for improvement. All teachers work in an energetic, enthusiastic and engaging style that affects the way in which pupils learn; relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and their teachers are very good.

194. The work in physical education clearly benefits from the very good leadership provided by a hard-working, capable and committed head of department. The documentation is most comprehensively written, department planning is well linked to the whole school development plan and good organisation ensures the smooth running of the daily activities in the subject. Assessment procedures and practice are very well advanced. The department makes good use of statistical data relating to performance targets and monitors the progress of groups of pupils. Planned further development will ensure that all individual pupils can be given more detail on improving their standards in specific activities. Most effective use is made of all specialist accommodation especially the very well maintained indoor teaching spaces that clearly contribute to the high standards in gymnastics and dance.

195. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement. Standards have been raised in most key areas. Attainment is higher, especially in the earlier years, and this is clearly the result of improvements in teaching and learning where the quality is consistently good. Assessment now sits centrally at the heart of the department's work. The allocation of time for older pupils in Years 10 and 11 GCSE 'full' and 'short' courses is currently insufficient to enable all pupils to reach their potential in either the practical or theoretical aspects of the courses. These arrangements deny some pupils full access to their National Curriculum entitlement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Above average results in the GCSE examination.
- Pupils generally achieve well in relation to their starting points in religious education.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Subject leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' underachievement in the GCSE examination.
- Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent.
- Pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunity to visit different places of worship.

196. Pupils were first entered for the GCSE short examination in religious studies in 1999, when just over half the 17 pupils who sat the examination gained the higher A*-C grades. Since then, the vast majority of pupils have been entered. In 2000 results were above average overall and girls' performance was much better than that of boys. The proportion of pupils obtaining at least a pass grade was higher than that found nationally. The 2001 results were very similar. Although the proportion of pupils who obtained the highest A* grade was higher than in most other subjects in the school, a significant proportion of boys of average and below average attainment do not achieve as well as they should.

197. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are broadly average. This represents good achievement in comparison with pupils' starting points in Year 7. Most pupils' knowledge and understanding of the key features of Christianity and other world faiths which they study are generally better than their understanding of how membership of a faith community helps people to make sense of life, or their capacity to evaluate religious issues. While Year 9 pupils of average attainment can describe features and symbolism in Hindu worship, they are not so confident in explaining the importance it has for believers. Higher attainers are confident when dealing with difficult questions such as the problem of evil in the world. They use complex technical language with confidence and are developing the capacity to evaluate their own and others' beliefs and views. Lower attaining pupils lack precision in using the

technical language of the subject and tend to rely on the teacher for explanation.

198. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a short GCSE course in religious studies. Standards of work seen in Year 11 in understanding and evaluating attitudes towards the family and marriage, are just above average and pupils' achievement overall is good. However, a small proportion of pupils, mostly boys, do not achieve as well as they should because they are not sufficiently well disposed to learn in this subject. Some lower attainers produce good quality project work on topics such as, using computers to research information, which is well selected and presented. A small minority of lower attaining pupils do not follow the GCSE course and have less time for religious education than other pupils. They reach standards which might be expected in their investigation of religious and social issues dealt with in the media, for example, in a Christmas edition of 'The Simpsons', but do not have sufficient time to cover all the ground expected by the Agreed Syllabus. Assessment information for pupils currently in Year 11 indicates that girls still reach higher overall standards than boys, but that the gap is narrowing as boys' performance improves.

199. Pupils who have special educational needs are well known by their teachers, who are generally able to provide individual attention and adapt the learning for them. This means that, in most cases, they make good progress in lessons. However, in some lessons, the work is not sufficiently well adapted or the number of such pupils restricts the amount of individual help which the teacher can provide and, consequently their progress is not as rapid.

200. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development particularly through an emphasis on its, often complex, technical vocabulary. There are opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in numeracy, for example by presenting and interpreting the results of their investigations as graphical form. A suitable range of opportunities is also provided for pupils to use computers in their learning.

201. Pupils are generally well motivated to learn, other than a small minority, mostly boys, in Years 10 and 11. The vast majority are interested and challenged by what the subject has to offer. They are prepared to ask questions as well as answer them and many are prepared to offer information as well. Boys and girls work easily and naturally with each other, and, when given the opportunity pupils work effectively in group work, for example in role-play. Behaviour is very good.

202. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching was good or better in over two-thirds of lessons. More good and better teaching was seen in lessons taught by teachers with a specialist qualification in the subject. Subject knowledge of non-specialists is adequate but sometimes lacks precision, or the depth and security where it can be used to stretch pupils. Non-specialist teaching in Year 7 was well planned and pupils made sound progress in learning details of some of the miracles performed by Jesus. However, greater emphasis on the nature and purpose of the Gospel accounts of miracles would have allowed this group of higher attainers to be stretched further. On the other hand, in a Year 8 lesson, which dealt with the difficulties of reconciling belief in God, with the existence of suffering and evil in the world, the pupils made very good progress, because their interest was immediately captured by the use of well-chosen resources. Some otherwise satisfactory teaching tends to miss opportunities to enable pupils to make personal responses to learning. All teachers review well at the start of lessons so that there is a good foundation for new learning and, in the better lessons, they also make good use of pupils' own experiences to stimulate interest. Learning is also generally well consolidated in concluding discussions. A good variety of interesting activities is provided. Year 7 pupils gain a good understanding of the nature of different types of writing in the Bible by creating their own library of relevant quotations. Year 9 pupils learn about Hindu worship by making models of shrines.

203. Relationships are good. Challenging behaviour from a small minority of boys in Years 10 and 11 is well handled but the concentration on their needs tends to restrict progress overall in the lesson. Marking is regular and helpful, but is inconsistent between teachers. Homework is set regularly and generally provides useful opportunities to consolidate, extend or prepare for new learning.

204. Subject management is very good. All issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been resolved although more use could still be made of visits to different places of worship. The curriculum has also improved by the very successful introduction of the short GCSE course. This works well for most pupils though more could be done for the small number of lower attaining groups who do

not yet follow an externally accredited course and have less time for their religious education than other pupils. Good procedures for assessing and analysing pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 are currently being implemented and are complemented by useful procedures for pupil self-assessment and target setting. There are good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching through classroom observation. Overall, improvements since the previous inspection is good.

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

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

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

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	9	100	96	33	46	6.9	6.6
Biology	5	20	88	-	34	0.4	5.2
Business studies	14	64	92	-	32	2.1	5.5
Chemistry	4	100	90	-	43	2.5	5.9
Computer studies	11	91	86	-	23	3.1	4.6
English language	9	67	91	22	30	3.7	5.3
English literature	7	71	95	14	37	3.4	5.9
French	4	50	89	25	38	3.0	5.6
Full Design and technology	13	69	91	-	30	2.2	5.4
General studies	39	36	85	3	30	1.2	4.9
Geography	9	89	92	33	38	4.7	5.7
History	5	40	88	20	35	2.8	5.5
Mathematics	7	29	87	-	43	0.6	5.8
Sociology	7	43	86	-	35	1.1	5.3
Sports/PE studies	7	100	92	-	25	2.9	5.1
Computer studies	2	100	74	-	13	1.5	1.8
Health and social care	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.0	10.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and physics, but biology and chemistry were also sampled. In biology and chemistry, examination results were below average in 2001. Students did as expected in chemistry considering their GCSE results. In biology they did rather less well. Two lessons were observed in each of the sampled subjects. Teaching was at least good in all four. In one where the teaching was excellent, the teacher's extensive knowledge and his infectious enthusiasm were significant factors in the good progress students made.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare lessons thoroughly.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that there is an identifiable connection between regular assessments and the system of grades used in AS and A2 modules.
- Measure progress against short-term individual student targets that are agreed with the students
- Ensure that ICT is more frequently used to enrich and support learning.
- Make formal provision for additional "catch-up" lessons for those students starting A/AS level courses from intermediate GCSE.

205. Standards of attainment in A-level GCE examinations broadly reflect students' prior learning and vary accordingly. In 2001 there were seven candidates and their results were very low in comparison with the national average. Two students attained grade E, and the remainder did not obtain a pass grade. On the basis of their GCSE average points scores, the two successful students achieved satisfactorily and in line with expectations, whilst the remainder did not meet expectations. In 2000, A-level results were below the national average with five of the six candidates attaining pass grades: two grade B, one grade C and two grade E. The level of achievement of this group of students was broadly satisfactory and in line with expectations. In both years students' overall results were similar to those they obtained in their other subjects. Over the three years 1999-2001, eleven of the nineteen students achieved an A-level grade in mathematics, and in 2000 three Year 13 students achieved a grade E in their AS modules. A small number of students do not complete the courses, typically one or two students per year.

206. The overall standard of work seen in A2 and AS lessons and students' written work is below the national average. The range of work reflects the standards required for students to attain up to grade B level, but is mainly pitched at grade C level, reflecting the prior attainment of most of the students. The achievement of the majority of students is at least satisfactory and matches their prior attainment, which ranges from GCSE grade C to grade A. Overall, in both Year 12 and Year 13, in each of the A2 and AS sets only one-third of the students studied GCSE mathematics at the higher level. Teachers make due allowance for the range of starting points and there is an inevitable cost in terms of the pace of work and corresponding lack of time for revision at the end of the modules. There is systematic progression in both depth and difficulty. The quality of students' notes varies and for some there is a lack of structured explanations to support revision. In the best examples students annotate their notes to suit their individual learning needs. The clarity of diagrams, particularly in mechanics, is satisfactory and promotes understanding, and almost all students are at ease with the statistics module. The pace of Year 12 work is impeded because a lack of competence with essential algebraic manipulation hinders progress. The quality of solutions ranges from good to inadequate, but is mainly at the expected standard. Marking of students' work is good in terms of detailed analysis, correction of inaccuracies and supporting comments. The assessment of the work is limited because the connection with how well a student is performing in relation to A-level grades is not clear. Similarly, a lack of clear connection between

assessment and student targets does not readily inform students what they need to do to improve. However, although assessment procedures lack formality, it is evident that most students make satisfactory progress over time. There is no difference in the relative performances of male and female students and, although in the previous three years significantly more males than females opted to study mathematics in the sixth form, currently the proportions are almost equal. The potential for using of ICT to highlight ideas and heighten understanding of concepts is not yet being sufficiently realised.

207. The quality of teaching is consistently good and three particular strengths characterise most lessons: the subject command of the teachers, detailed preparation of lessons, and the very good relationships that have been established between teachers and students. The combination of these factors and the positive attitude to study of the students ensure that lessons are conducted in a studious and purposeful manner. In discussions students display enthusiasm for the subject and say they are confident of success, with almost all estimating that they were working at grade C level. In mechanics and statistics lessons the teachers prepare a range of models that effectively illustrate concepts and enhance understanding. New work is planned to systematically build on and remedy shortcomings in prior learning. Teachers skilfully summarise all the essential prior knowledge and skills required so that students become increasingly confident in their approach to new topics. Significant weaknesses in algebra are speedily identified and lessons suitably adjusted to ensure that the understanding of new work is not unduly impeded. However, there is an inevitable loss of pace in such lessons and a use of time that cannot be afforded. The teachers' command of subject enables them to formulate questions that promote learning with understanding and they use any incorrect student responses to skilfully correct misconceptions. For example, when working with increasingly searching questions applying the rules of differentiation, the teacher was able to separate the new work, which did not present any problem of understanding to the students, from weaknesses in the students' capacity to carry out incidental manipulation of algebraic expressions. The teacher illuminated, isolated and corrected the weaknesses by pointing out the analogy between the rules of ordinary numbers and the algebraic processes. Students are actively involved in lessons. They display very good levels of concentration and attempt to resolve any difficulties independently before seeking assistance.

208. Students' capacity for working independently with guidance from a teacher is exemplified in the approach of Year 13 students to preparing their portfolios for the application of number element in their key skills programme. They demonstrate responsibility and maturity in discussing their work with the teacher and are well poised to achieve level 2 certification.

209. There is a good match of teachers to the requirements of the various modules in the AS and A2-level mathematics courses. They share a commitment to do the best for the students and improve results. For example, staff outside normal lessons, on a group and individual basis generously and routinely gives extra tuition. The time allocation for mathematics lessons is just sufficient to meet specifications, but there is inadequate formal provision specifically dedicated to raising students' algebraic competence at the outset of the courses.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Results are improving and in 2001 were as expected considering GCSE results.
- Teaching is good: lessons are well structured and bright with brisk teaching creating interest and involvement.
- Students have an excellent positive attitude, work well together and show great enthusiasm and commitment.
- Students work hard and show initiative in designing their own projects and competently carry out research.
- The subject is well led and resources for the new syllabuses are being rapidly developed.

Areas for improvement

- Some students do not understand scientific terms and concepts and find difficulty in applying them confidently in new situations.
- Marking is good but greater use of sharply focused short-term targets concerned with learning goals would give students who are less capable a clearer direction.
- The written work of a few students is untidy, disorganised and incomplete and would benefit from more structured requirements.
- Results in the academic examinations currently taken are lower than average and consideration should be given to providing more appropriate courses than academic physics for some students.

210. The AS level results for Year 13 students in 2001 were below those nationally but were as expected given the GCSE results of those involved. Results for Year 12 students showed an improvement and were also what might have been expected. Some students who entered the course with very low grades at GCSE did not achieve a classified grade.

211. The standard of work of current students is around average. They respond to the effective teaching well. They performed well in practical work seen and competently create electrical circuits to achieve particular tasks. In Year 12 they show good research skills developing their knowledge and understanding from a variety of sources. They are rapidly developing the skills of creating public presentations and delivering them effectively, for example, on the properties of materials. In Year 13 they show knowledge of electromagnetic induction and can quickly process experimental results. However, some students who entered the course with modest grades at GCSE have difficulty in applying scientific concepts or terms confidently to new situations. The open entry policy is a good one giving students further opportunities, but students are currently insecure in some basic ideas. The standards seen are above those achieved last year because the school has adopted a new course with high quality resource materials, the pupils have higher attainment on entry to the course, and are more committed to succeeding. Overall achievement is now good. However, some students who still find it difficult to succeed may benefit from an alternative to academic physics.

212. Teaching is uniformly good and sometimes very good. The bright, brisk approach immediately creates interest and a good learning atmosphere. Teachers are competent in their subject knowledge and are able to bring life to their teaching by setting the physics in the wider context of the real world. A lesson on measuring the movement of celestial bodies using radar drew on the teacher's experience prospecting as a geologist, and used a tennis demonstration to explain the reflection of radar waves from moving bodies. Short demonstrations clarify and enliven theory lessons and practical work, investigations and research projects are included in the variety of teaching strategies used. Teachers are skilled at questioning and in rephrasing complex ideas in more readily understandable ways. Lessons are well planned. Marking is regular and thorough and includes helpful comments. Progress is monitored. Targets are sometimes provided but these do not provide the immediate short-term learning goals which would best help the less capable students.

213. The response of students to the teaching is good and they learn well. They are enthusiastic and interested. They readily join in discussions and ask questions. They work well together in a friendly, co-operative atmosphere. The school is particularly good at providing a clear positive direction for its

students focused on achieving good academic results in a supportive environment. Students are given opportunities to develop their independence and initiative through research projects and the investigations they devise. For example, much effort and ingenuity was put into a research project focused on materials. Each student made effective presentations to their colleagues on the material of their choice. These presentations showed their developing research and presentational skills. They are involved in reading tasks and the obtaining of information from a variety of sources. Most are confident in using ICT and employ it when they feel it is appropriate. The written work of most students is good but a few have untidy, incomplete and badly organised files which would not be of great use in preparing for examinations.

214. The subject is well led, well managed and is being developed well. The excellent, new syllabus and scheme of work have been effectively implemented and are proving useful structures for teaching physics well and enabling the pupils to learn effectively. However some pupils who entered the course with low GCSE grades continue to find difficulty with academic courses.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was inspected as a focus subject.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- The standards at the GCE AS level are improving.
- Teachers' knowledge, expertise and commitment are good.
- Students are well motivated and work hard.
- The monitoring and assessment of students' work and progress is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students lack confidence in their metalwork and engineering techniques and this inhibits their design work.
- There are weaknesses in students' orthographic and isometric drawing, affecting the clarity of their final working design.
- There is a need for a wider range of design and technology courses in the sixth form.

215. The standards attained by students in the 2001 GCSE A and AS level examinations were below those reached nationally. Sixth form courses in design and technology are a recent innovation in the school and many of the students had relatively low grades at GCSE. The percentage of pupils completing the course in both A and AS level was high. The numbers taking the courses has increased, and now include some female students.

216. Standards in lessons seen and the scrutiny of work are average overall, and better than the 2001 results would suggest. The standards of coursework produced by students in Year 13 are of good quality. Students are able to use the computing facilities well in designing their projects, for example, in a well designed project to hold a wide screen television.

217. Year 12 students have made a positive start to their courses and are consolidating and building on their experiences gained at GCSE. For example; students were investigating designs and designers of the twentieth century so that they would be able to discuss the development of design and the impact of modern materials and technology. They were also able to analyse the features of table lamps with regards to stability, type of light emitted and the effects of shades and reflectors. The school has responded to the criticism in the previous report and now all students use ICT as an integral part of their design work, and some very good examples were seen in their folders.

218. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Teachers use their subject knowledge very effectively to plan interesting lessons. The combination of good exemplar material and challenging

questions ensures that students are well placed to tackle the tasks set. In a Year 13 lesson, students were given very good individual help and advice on their projects. The enthusiasm shown by the teachers for the subject has considerable impact on students and their attitude to learning. Students are attentive, work well together, share ideas and support and help each other. The atmosphere in all lessons reflects the strong positive relationships that have been formed between them and their teacher. The confidence of Year 13 students in response to questions showed their growing depth of subject knowledge and understanding. Greater participation by the some students in lessons would enhance their personal development and study skills. However, students' lack of knowledge of metalworking and engineering skills and processes inhibits their design, and they are sometimes unable to show sufficient constructional detail in their drawings, or discuss in depth technical problems to do with joining materials together. Whilst the use of computer design is good, students' abilities as technical drawers are weaker. Their sketching is clear but the final design, when drawn in orthographic projection, is not detailed enough. Exploded isometric drawings were not seen which would help show constructional details better.

219. Marking and assessment are very thorough and students have a good knowledge of their standards and progress. Teachers collate helpful information concerning students' prior attainment, and use it effectively to track their progress. All the students in the present Year 12 studied a technical or graphics course at GCSE, but none studied food, textiles or information technology. There is a need to provide for more pupils at the end of their GCSE courses to progress on to a suitable course in technology.

220. The good teaching and learning in the sixth form is the result of good curriculum leadership and supporting departmental policies. The sixth form teaching is shared by two teachers and they work well as a team. Documentation is very thorough and informative. It identifies what is to be learnt and the supporting material required. The department accepts a wide spread of ability on to the A-level courses and adapts the work well. There is a thorough analysis of students' progress through the courses and this enables the department to modify the course and the teaching, so that students become effective learners.

BUSINESS

Business education was inspected as a focus subject.

Business education

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teacher has secure subject knowledge and lessons are well prepared.
- Students are achieving well.

Areas for improvement

- Involve students more in their own learning.
- Develop the number and nature of links with the business world.
- Broaden the nature and range of courses to meet more closely the needs of students.

221. In A-Level business studies, the examination results for 2001 were well below average. This course is relatively new and no clear trend has yet been set in two years' results. At AS level in the 2001 examinations, overall performance was improved. Many students enter this course with only modest points scores in the subject at GCSE level and there are some without specific subject experience. Many of them make relatively good progress and achieve well in the course and this represents clear added value. In Year 13, most students know the causes of 'market failure', have a clear understanding of the key elements in the case study and can use specific terminology appropriately, for example, 'monopolies', 'demand' and 'price-setting mechanisms'. Work seen in folders for both year groups is accurate and well presented, marking is regular, thorough and comments are helpful.

222. Teaching and learning in the subject are satisfactory. Key strengths in teaching are subject

knowledge, planning and preparation. In some lessons the teacher makes good use of the students' own experiences by drawing on their personal knowledge relating to, for example, computer games. This reference to contemporary products and producers in Year 12 brings a significant reality to 'product analysis' and helps students unlock the theoretical concepts of business. More use should be made of this approach as it encourages and enables the students to become more fully involved in their learning. Many students work hard in a positive and committed manner and this has a clear impact on their achievement. There are those who lack confidence and, despite the teacher's best efforts, are not easily drawn into the classroom discussions that strengthen knowledge and deepen understanding.

223. The teacher of business education at 'A' level is new to the school and indeed new to the profession. The designated manager of the subject is new to the subject. Both are working hard against a background of below average student attainment at both this level and in GCSE. A strong organisational base in which to develop the subject has been set up, together with clear and careful support and guidance for a newly qualified teacher. Links with the local business world need to be strengthened and this would go some way to improving and increasing the students' knowledge and understanding of business today. In order to raise standards of attainment in the subject, the department should begin to analyse more closely student strengths and ensure that the lessons and courses are well matched to those strengths. The department now has a clear sense of direction and a good understanding of how to move forward. It is now well placed to seek improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology was inspected as a focus subject.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Students are opting to study ICT in increasing numbers.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and the teaching of the theoretical units is good.
- Students have very positive attitudes and work well.
- Good resources.

Areas for improvement

- Standard of coursework.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' progress.
- Amount of time allocated in lessons for individual work on computers.

224. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 and 2001 were similar. All but one student passed but only one student gained a grade higher than a C. In both years, results were below the national average but broadly similar to those in other subjects, and as expected considering the students' GCSE grades. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. 21 Year 12 students took the AS-level examination in 2001 and although overall the results were below the national average 17 obtained a pass grade. As in the A-level examination there were no A or B grades but the results were broadly as expected considering the students' GCSE grades. There has been a large increase in students taking the examination courses, from two in 1999 to 25 in Year 12 due in part to a more flexible examination policy.

225. Standards of work of current students are below average although their work on the theory units is considerably better than their coursework. Some good work was observed in Year 12, for example, on health and safety and the consequences of malpractice and crime on information systems. In Year 13, for example, most students developed a good understanding of different software packages and had the skills to use them in different contexts. However, in both years the project they selected was not always well matched to their level of attainment and did not allow them to make full use of their potential. In addition there was generally insufficient refinement of the project as students proceeded through the stages of analysis, design, implementation, testing and evaluation. Overall, students made sound

progress and, given their below average level of attainment on entry to the sixth form course, their achievement was satisfactory.

226. Students are enthusiastic and have very positive attitudes. They arrive punctually, prepared to work in their lessons. In particular, they enjoy working individually on computers. They willingly help other students who are experiencing problems. They have easy access to computers in non-taught time and they make good use of this facility to extend and enhance their learning. They use the internet well to research information.

227. Teaching of A and AS level ICT is provided by relatively inexperienced teachers. They are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. The teaching of the theoretical units is generally good, lesson objectives match the appropriate examination specification, and teachers have good working relationships with the students. Although in some lessons there is too much 'teacher talk' and too little time for work on computers, students make good progress and achieve well. However in project work, where the teaching or guidance is delivered to individual students and the examination specification is not as detailed or specific, the teaching is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient assessment and monitoring of students' work that would allow teachers at all stages of the project to intervene and identify areas which could be improved. As teachers increase in confidence and gain more knowledge of what is required by the examiners, then there is much potential for students' work to improve and reach standards, and hence examination grades, which are above average. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory.

228. The management of the subject is sound. There are clear schemes of work, external data is well analysed and individual students are set appropriate targets. Good resources are used effectively. A good key skills course enables students not taking ICT as an A or AS level course to extend their skills and utilise them in other subjects. Teachers are supported with a number of courses being taught in conjunction with the head of department, but this could be extended by more team teaching where teachers would have further opportunities to learn from each other. This relatively new sixth form subject is attracting more students every year; it is too soon to see any trend in examination results but there is good capacity for improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

This subject was not sampled.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This subject was not sampled.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design, but music and media studies were also sampled.

Music has just been introduced in the school and the one AS level student attained average results in the two units taken. This was in line with the student's performance in other subjects. One lesson was observed in which good teaching helped the student to improve appraisal skills and consider the importance of key centre in relation to composition.

In media studies, AS examination results in 2001 were broadly average and showed good progression from the candidates' GCSE results. Two lessons were observed. Both lessons were satisfactory and in one, good teaching helped pupils to consolidate and extend their learning through a question and answer session. Emphasis on the detailed structural analysis of illustrated texts allowed students to gain secure understanding of this medium

Art and design

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

Strengths

- High quality discussions related to students' work.
- Independent development of students' projects.

- Good leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Better provision for independent practical work.

229. A-level results in 2001 were above average compared with all schools and several pupils did better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. 2001 results were higher than in 2000. AS level results were below average and were slightly below those expected in relation to their GCSE results. However, several students undertook the course without having taken GCSE or GNVQ art and design. Male and female students did equally well.

230. Standards in Year 13 are average. Students are achieving well in relation to their AS level attainment because mature discussions between teachers and students have identified areas for improvement and consequently students' work is well focused. The quality of individual discussions has led to students having a good understanding of art and design in which they are able to relate the work of different artists to their own work, analysing not just the style of an artist's work, but how composition and technique express spiritual and cultural ideas. Consequently their own work usually shows clear lines of development, although some work shows insufficient exploration of alternative ideas. Students are able to use a wide range of drawing and painting techniques in developing their ideas and make good use of collage and relief. Textiles and clay are used occasionally but there is little exploration of form in three dimensions. Pupils draft and revise their written work well.

231. In Year 12 standards of work are above average and students are achieving well. They acquire a good understanding of art and design. Over the year, their independence develops well but the lack of a base where they can return to work in progress and surround themselves with source materials tends to slow the transition to higher level, more independent, work. Most have good observational drawing skills and are able to experiment well with different media and techniques.

232. Most students work hard and have chosen to study art and design because they enjoy it rather than for career reasons. Some have previously taken GCSE and some GNVQ. The latter found more difficulty at the start of the course but all enjoy the independence of work at this level. Their ability to work independently develops well over the two years and most are able to articulate their ideas well. This has improved substantially since the previous inspection.

233. Teaching is good overall and some lessons are very good. As a result, students' learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use this well in mature discussions with pupils. Both teachers are enthusiastic and consequently students respond well, making good use of extra-curricular time. Teaching of individual pupils is very good and develops understanding of ideas and their expression through different media and techniques. Students are encouraged to experiment, although occasionally lessons in Year 12 are over-structured. Very thorough marking of written work ensures high standards in this aspect of the subject. Teachers make good use of exhibitions, for instance, through a visit to the Tate Modern and exhibiting work in the Lowry Centre.

234. The new head of department has made a very good start and put in place many strategies to improve standards. Most notable is the greater rigour which shows in the students' understanding of the subject. The disappointing AS level results in 2001 have been thoroughly analysed and effective strategies adopted to raise the standards of those students and ensure higher standards from current AS students. She is enthusiastic, has a clear, appropriate vision for the development of the subject and the organisational ability to turn the vision into reality. Thorough monitoring ensures that students progress well and that the newly qualified teacher contributes well to teaching in the sixth form. Since the previous inspection art and design has been established with expectations of good standards at A level in the school.

HUMANITIES

Within this cluster of subjects the school provides courses in geography, history and psychology. The focus was on geography but history and psychology were also sampled.

In history the results in 2001 were well below average but improved on those for 2000. They represented satisfactory achievement. Two lessons on political history were observed and both were good. Good resources enabled the students to consider the Treaty of Versailles. The teacher worked hard to guide their learning towards interpretation and judgement but in written work description was stronger than analysis.

Psychology is offered at AS level. Although the results were below average in 2001 they represented good achievement. Good teaching encouraged the students to work in groups to explore Zimbardo's dispositional hypothesis that both prisoners and their guards have dispositions that make conflict inevitable.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Results are gradually improving and are close to the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
- The very good and mature attitudes of students towards their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Further improvement of standards.
- A detailed development plan to focus on further improvement.

235. The A-level examination results have improved gradually since the previous inspection but were still below average in 2001 in terms of average point scores. In terms of the percentage pass rate for all students and those obtaining the higher A and B grades the results were close to the national average. Value-added analyses indicate that most students achieved the results expected of them in relation to their earlier attainment at GCSE. At AS level, four out of 18 students were ungraded though two of these will re-take the examination. Of the others all obtained at least a grade D and nine gained a C grade or higher. There was some good achievement though overall it was satisfactory. All students who began the A-level course in 1999 completed it last year.

236. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that standards in Year 13 are average. In relation to their average levels of GCSE attainment these standards represent good achievement. In work on population, higher-attaining students demonstrate a detailed knowledge of ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia. They increase their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and its impact in geography. Students analyse the structure of populations and consider the social and economic benefits and disadvantages of multicultural societies. Lower attaining students describe data presented in graphs but do not explain in detail, for example, the effects and human response to disasters in countries at different stages of economic development.

237. Students in Year 12 on the AS course have settled quickly to the demands of advanced level work and they are achieving well. Standards are average. Higher-attaining students interpret satellite images of weather systems competently, identifying fronts and pressure systems, and linking them to wind patterns. The work of lower attaining students contains errors, with descriptions and explanations that are less detailed and often limited to one-word answers.

238. Overall, teaching is good and consequently the students learn well. During the inspection, teaching was consistently good and very good in half of the lessons observed. Teachers plan learning sequentially, and their expert explanations enable the students to acquire knowledge effectively as, for example, in a lesson on glaciation. There was a clear focus on the meaning of key words and a very effective game reinforced the technical language of urban change in another lesson. Teachers use a variety of methods. In a lesson on the development of country parks, students were challenged to analyse a variety of information and present the opinions of different groups of people. The effect of this

role-play situation was limited because of the long preparatory explanation. A good homework was set to prepare a briefing paper for the development board. Students sometimes learn practical skills in isolation from theory, and a lesson on measures of dispersion would have been better linked with learning on climate. This lesson lacked pace because basic graph work took a long time and some students did not gain a secure understanding of the meaning and interpretation of the inter-quartile range. Marking is accurate and informs students how to improve their work.

239. Students are interested and talk enthusiastically about their work in geography. Their consistently very mature attitudes and responses in lessons underpin the quality of their learning. They enjoy opportunities to learn independently on topics like wind power and tropical cyclones. They very much appreciated fieldwork on glaciation as it enhanced their learning just before the examination.

240. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Standards and results have improved gradually over recent years. The new courses have been planned and the quality of teaching is monitored. There is insufficient focus in the development plan on improving teaching and learning in the sixth form, and it does not contain examination targets against which to monitor and evaluate the performance of the subject. Students have a target grade and their progress is monitored rigorously. There was no mention of A-level work in the previous report so it is impossible to judge improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection covered English and French.

The focus was on English literature but English language and literature lessons were also sampled. There are no examination results to report for this new course. The lessons were at least good, with students making good progress in the linguistic analysis of texts from different eras and genres.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Improving standards evident in Year 13 and confirmed by these students' AS results.
- Good teaching by dedicated teachers.
- The students' very positive attitudes.
- The very good support for academic progress and the identification of strengths and weaknesses.

Areas for improvement

Continue to raise standards by:

- Use of good models of students' writing to improve expression of average and below average students
- Explicit use of target grades and monitoring progress towards them
- Increased monitoring and evaluation of teaching as post-16 provision expands and new teachers join the courses.

241. The 2001 GCSE A level results were well below the national average and a decline on the results achieved in 1999 and 2000. This judgement should be treated with caution given the small number of candidates (six). Nevertheless, the students' achievement was broadly satisfactory given their earlier GCSE results. The current Year 13 students achieved well in their AS examinations. Their average point score was in line with the provisional national average, and about half the group at all levels of attainment did better than might have been expected from their GCSE results.

242. The standards of the Year 13 students continue to be broadly average as judged by work seen during the inspection. They are making a hard-working response to the course. Above average students achieve the highest grades. Their course work assignments on Othello' (Act V ii) were first class examples of detailed evaluative commentary, strongly supported by close textual reference and enhanced by frequent comments about the impact of Shakespeare's language on interpretation and

meaning. They dealt confidently with any ambiguities in the text and their writing style was mature and appropriate. Average students do not include the required detail of text or linguistic analysis to attain the higher grades, but their understanding is secure enough to produce average standards of work. Below average students' work tends to be too sketchy in detail. It also includes errors in accuracy and some flaws in written expression.

243. Students in Year 12 have adjusted well to the course and most appear to be making good progress and achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. In a very lively lesson all participated with great enthusiasm in a discussion about differing interpretations of Heathcliff's character. This was first class post-16 teaching and learning. The higher and middle attainers were able to support their judgement with good references to the text. Lower attainers relied more upon personal response but were equally secure in making their judgements and participated with enthusiasm. Awkwardness in expression undermines some students' written work and some do not include enough detail, but overall they have successfully adapted to the demands of the course.

244. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. The main strengths are: teachers' specialist subject knowledge about the texts and the course requirements; the very good planning that ensures close links between lesson activities and learning objectives; the very good marking that identifies strengths and weaknesses in equal measure; the encouragement of independent research. Probing questions and a selection of critics' views helped the students to engage well in whole class discussions about the methods Bronte uses to develop our sympathy for Rochester. However, a trend in all lessons was for the teacher to lead discussions and the students to respond. This resulted in too much student dependence on the teacher.

245. The students do a considerable amount of written work in the form of notes, commentaries on extracts from their texts, and their own research. The work is marked with extreme thoroughness so errors of expression, accuracy and understanding are identified. A grade criteria sheet enhances the students' awareness of what is required and all work is graded accurately. Some students whose written expression lacks the required assuredness, clarity and maturity require more support and guidance on developing an appropriate model of writing.

246. Students learn well. They are attentive, work hard and usually respond positively in lessons. They showed they can engage in lively discussion in lessons about 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights' but they can also appear reticent and less confident in group work, as during one lesson on the 'Wild Sargasso Sea'. However, they do rise to the challenge: one Year 12 male student's presentation about the character of Heathcliff contained many excellent and articulate phrases. It also showed a secure understanding of a number of critics' views.

247. The course is popular and well-subscribed. The retention rate is also very good with all AS students continuing to A2. The students themselves are extremely positive about the course, the texts they have read, and the quality of teaching and support which includes extra classes during holidays - confirmation of their teachers' high level of dedication. They make good use of ICT in the drafting of their work and use websites to research Coleridge and Blake. While confirming they were regular readers the course had strengthened further their interest in reading.

248. The improvement in standards is due to a number of critical factors. The very good leadership of the head of department has ensured that teachers have taken the opportunity presented by the new specifications to rewrite schemes of work in a more explicit and consistent way. As a result the schemes, teaching and learning are more closely focused on fulfilling the learning objectives of the new courses. Furthermore, the embedding of the very good action planning procedure to monitor students' progress (attendance, punctuality, meeting deadlines, participation in lessons, file organisation and breadth and depth of coursework) has provided much improved and highly effective support for the students' academic progress.

249. The procedure does not, however, include a sharp enough focus on the progress towards precise target grades and related criteria. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not as extensive as in the rest of the department's work and not sufficient to meet the challenge provided by the expansion of post-16 English courses.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students develop their comprehension skills well.
- Attitudes are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Raise standards through formal monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Students need to take initiative more and develop their answers in speaking.
- Marking and assessment.

250. Numbers taking A-level French since its introduction three years ago have been low. In 2000, the two students who took the examination achieved a pass at grade E. In 2001, only two out of four students passed the examination. Although results closely matched teacher estimates, some students did not do as well as predicted by their GCSE results. The school did not enter students for AS examinations in 2001, all Year 12 students have been entered for 2002.

251. Standards of work seen in lessons and in students' files are below average. However, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, most students are achieving well because of their excellent attitudes and attendance, and good teaching.

252. In Year 13, numbers are again low, with only three students following the A-level course. Two other students in the group, who are preparing for AS entry, were absent during the inspection week and their work was not seen. Students achieve more highly in comprehension skills and identify points of view and attitudes with some success. Written work has clearly improved over time, particularly in the increased awareness of structure and greater clarity of expression, but very basic errors still remain. When they speak, students are hesitant, responses are relatively brief and they do not develop their answers sufficiently. Some of this is due to a natural reticence in the group, despite teachers' patience in trying to draw the students out. Students' achievement over time is satisfactory.

253. In Year 12, although numbers have risen to twelve, most students did not study for the higher tier GCSE and so their starting point was much lower than is usually found. However, because teaching is good and attitudes are excellent, students are achieving well and standards are rising, although still below average. Students are building on their GCSE work and most have made fair progress in dealing with more complex language. They are beginning to show a reasonable understanding of tapes and texts on social and moral issues and have already learnt a quantity of topic-related vocabulary. In speaking, the range of ability is wide. The more able students respond readily and accurately with growing confidence, whereas weaker students do not always fully understand the questions or lack the requisite vocabulary to reply. However, they are not reluctant to speak. In writing, most students are building up their knowledge of essay phrases and are beginning to present their arguments more logically. Some students are still insecure in their knowledge of tenses and structure which leads to some clumsy and occasionally anglicised sentence writing, coupled with basic errors.

254. Attitudes in the sixth form are excellent. Students are keen, interested, well motivated and they persevere. They apply themselves diligently in class and put much time and effort into the completion of homework tasks. They attend extra classes with the foreign language assistant and make very good use of the subject's facilities and resources for independent study and research, including regular use of the Internet. They attend university sixth form language days and participate in cultural events, such as cinema visits. However, there are no established links with France.

255. Teaching and learning are good overall. The strengths of teaching are the teachers' subject expertise, their thorough planning and their good knowledge of the students individually. The bridging course provided for students starting A-level is particularly effective. Challenging articles provide the stimulus for class and group discussion of a wide range of topical issues and the foreign language assistant is used most effectively as a valuable resource alongside the teacher. Teachers show good

understanding of the new criteria for assessment in the very full feedback they give students on their written work, but moderation of standards across the department is not yet in place. Marking for accuracy needs to be more rigorous. For example, students in Year 13 are continuing to make the same basic errors over time because they are not being picked up early enough. Students say they value all the feedback they receive but would like a clearer idea about their target grades. Teachers are clearly learning from experience and are willing to share ideas. However, to raise standards more quickly, monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be introduced formally, along the lines of the very good practice in the main school.