

INSPECTION REPORT

KIRKBIE KENDAL SCHOOL

Kendal

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112427

Headteacher: Mr D Smart

Reporting inspector: W K Baxendale
02928

Dates of inspection: 5th – 9th November 2001

Inspection number: 190245

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lound Road
Kendal
Cumbria

Postcode: LA9 7EQ

Telephone number: 01539 727422

Fax number: 01539 729243

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr F Pattison

Date of previous inspection: 23–27th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
02928	W K Baxendale	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13346	C Bailey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
03943	D Innes	Team inspector	English	
08756	P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics	
08552	W Hart	Team inspector	Science Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
08503	A Allfree	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
03827	J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27407	W Stoneham	Team inspector	History Business studies Travel and tourism	
08672	M Roberts	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
24127	J Kidd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
30297	G Spruce		Music	
22906	B Hodgson		Physical education	
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	

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Victoria Street
Burnham on Sea
Somerset TA8 1AN

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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kirkbie Kendal is an average sized comprehensive school. There are 1003 pupils on roll including 145 in the sixth form. There are more boys than there are girls. Numbers on roll are rising. The pupils, who are very nearly all from a white, British background, come from the town of Kendal and a wide surrounding, rural area. Only one pupil has English as an additional language. Few pupils enter the school after the start of Year 7 and few leave before the end of Year 11. The pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Well below average proportions of the pupils are entitled to a free school meal. About average proportions (23 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational needs. Of these, a proportion (3.6 per cent) that is broadly in line with the national average has a statement of special educational needs. Of these, however, an above average proportion has emotional and behavioural difficulties and the school forms part of a social inclusion project.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Kirkbie Kendal is an improving school that is growing in popularity. Substantial changes to the way the school operates have put it in a very strong position to raise what is currently satisfactory achievement further: inspection evidence suggests this should happen. An effective reshuffling of the staff and new appointments have brought in some very good management and teaching skills. Nearly all pupils are eager to and know how to learn. The governors provide very strong support; finances are very well managed and the sixth form is viable. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- GCSE standards in mathematics, design and technology, history and physical education are well above the national averages for these subjects.
- Average points scores are well above the national averages in GCSE.
- It has taken some effective measures directly to improve teaching in weak subjects, so none is now unsatisfactorily taught.
- Leadership and management are very good in history and ICT (information and communication technology).
- Teaching and learning are mostly good in the sixth form.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes to school are good and relationships are very good: most are well aware of how to learn.
- Improving collaboration with other schools and colleges is extending pupils' learning opportunities well.
- Nearly all teachers work very hard.

What could be improved

- Too many pupils' written work lacks precision and accuracy; the school has no literacy policy.
- The school's attention to improving teaching and learning and behaviour management is not prominent enough in school planning; a policy on assessment also still needs to be completed.
- Extra learning support for the pupils with behavioural difficulties is insufficient.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in geography and modern foreign languages; posts of responsibility need clearer definition in English.
- Communications with parents are in need of improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvements since the previous inspection in September 1996 have been satisfactory. The school is now in a good position to improve further because better analysis of standards and management

systems are in place. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved: it is now good. Average GCSE point scores are well above national averages and have risen at a faster rate than the national trend of improvement. Standards in art, geography and French are now higher, though the latter two are still amongst the weaker subjects. Whole school planning is comprehensive, but it needs sharper focus on how to improve learning. The school's collection and use of data is better. The school's sense of educational direction is not yet shared fully by all. ICT has improved, but still remains a weakness, as the pupils do not receive their full entitlement in subjects.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards seen at the inspection show an improving situation overall. When they start the school, the pupils' attainment is above average. They make at least satisfactory progress and some, particularly higher attainers, make good progress. Careful analyses of pupils' performances, conducted during their time in school, show they make progress that is, on average, well up to what is expected, compared with the national figures. In 2000, standards at the end of Year 9 were above average: they were higher in mathematics and science than in English, where too many did not reach projected levels. A large improvement in 2001 was because English results rose to about the same level as those in mathematics and science. The teacher assessments in other subjects indicate standards that are about in line with what is expected nationally, but in history, art and ICT standards were below expectation, showing in most cases unsatisfactory progress, not found by inspectors. Newly appointed teachers have produced general improvements this year. The introduction of ICT teaching is making inroads into what is still a weakness.

For 14 year-olds, improvements over time are in line with national trends and above them for GCSE, where in 2000, average points scores were well above the national average and above average for similar schools (no national data were available for 2001 at the time of the inspection). The school does overstretch some pupils who cannot cope with at least ten GCSE examinations so, in 2000, the proportions obtaining five or more higher grade, A*-C, GCSE results were only just above the national average, and below average compared with similar schools. There was also a slight fall in 2001. Girls do better than boys: their results are further above the national average for girls than are those of the boys. GCSE results are best in subjects such as mathematics and design and technology, which make least demands on the pupils' writing at length. A key factor in underachievement, where it exists, is a weakness in some pupils' writing and the school has identified this as a major area for improvement to raise standards. The pupils with special educational needs attain satisfactory results in line with expectations. The school has not met its examination results targets in the last two years, but inspection evidence suggests this should soon alter.

Whilst standards in the sixth form overall are above average, for example in A-level mathematics, in which the students do consistently well, there is also underachievement and some students do not do as well as they should. The school is working hard to overcome this by implementing more rigorous measures to improve homework and feeding back to students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about their school life. Their attitudes are a real boost to attainment, only a very few immature pupils with behavioural difficulties are unable to benefit fully from what the school has to offer. The attitudes of sixth formers are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is a spur to attainment. No pupil has been excluded permanently in the last two years. The behaviour of a comparatively very small number of pupils with identified behaviour problems does, however, undermine learning when they do not have the benefit of learning support assistance for some subjects; exclusions, 40 in the last academic year, are used to effectively to reduce the adverse impact.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Social development is a strength of the school, which provides an orderly environment, conducive to good learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates are just above the national average and improved methods of recording absences have led to a fall in unauthorised absences. The attendance of sixth formers is excellent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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 now satisfactory quality of teaching and of learning in Years 7 to 11 represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. No subject is now unsatisfactorily taught. The teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects helps the pupils to learn. They manage the pupils well and planning, teaching methods, expectations of pupils, use of assessment, support staff and time are all satisfactory. Good homework extends learning well. Teaching in English is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good from then on. Good English teaching places the onus on pupils to explain reasons for their judgements, helping learning and the retention of knowledge. The best marking carefully explains how to improve, but the quality of correction is not uniformly good in this and in most other subjects. Teaching is good in mathematics, where much of it excites the pupils through lively class discussions; the best teaching helps the pupils to link what they have learned beforehand with what they are engaged with at the time. Teaching is satisfactory in science, but the teachers are sometimes too keen to tell the pupils what to do rather than challenging them to investigate for themselves. The use of ICT (information and communication technology) to broaden learning is comparatively weak in most subjects. Literacy is well taught in English, history and mathematics, but there are weaknesses in other subjects; the school has no overall policy or practice to help overcome this major factor in underachievement. Teachers exploit the pupils' good numeracy skills to extend learning effectively in subjects other than mathematics. Teaching is often well tailored to the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. The challenges posed by pupils with behavioural difficulties sometimes mean that teachers have to give too much attention to this minority and insufficient attention to the majority; there are not enough learning support assistants to help meet the educational needs of these pupils. Some teaching does not take full advantage of pupils' readiness to learn. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the sixth form. It more closely matches the students' very good inclination to learn. They use ICT and the extended library

facilities effectively, work conscientiously in the main, so good learning occurs. The best teaching and learning relies on the students to act as mature young adults capable of working some things out for themselves.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is a satisfactory balance of compulsory and optional courses. The use of ICT across all subjects is, however, unsatisfactory. Improvements to provision have broadened the range of courses available to pupils and to students in the sixth form. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form and no daily act of collective worship for all takes place.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. All pupils have equal access to all subjects of the curriculum and alternative courses are available for those who need a broader range. Individual education plans have been revised to give clearer targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Improvements since the previous inspection are substantial. An audit of provision has raised awareness of how individual subjects contribute to this important aspect of education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Suitable arrangements for child protection are in place. Health and safety have improved: there are no major hazards. Policies on behaviour are not linked closely enough to learning in class, but the effective pastoral system ensures the well being of pupils and students in the sixth form. Good measures are being taken to improve the way that assessment can be used to raise standards.

Although the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall, its relationships with some of the parents are unsatisfactory. Over 30 per cent of returned questionnaires reported weak communications and dissatisfaction with the way that the school works in collaboration with parents. Many say they are not consulted enough about changes to practice.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. There are big improvements in the ways management is organised and rigour is greater. This has now provided an opportunity for the headteacher to delegate to a greater extent and to tackle existing weaknesses in communication. Some parents and staff still need to be persuaded of the benefits of change.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. They carry out their legal responsibilities satisfactorily except in the provision of religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The collection of data is good with action to raise standards further in place. However, middle managers are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the school's priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Except for insufficient learning support assistants for current needs, staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Specific grant is well used for its intended purposes and the school's procedures for monitoring expenditure are very good. The application of principles of best value is satisfactory, but more could be done to make comparisons against national, rather than local,

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way their child makes progress in school. • The way the school gets their child to work hard and to do his/her best. • The teaching is good. • Their child likes school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is seen not to work closely enough with the parents. • The way the school keeps them informed on what is happening. • The amounts of homework given. • The range of out-of-school activities is not wide enough.

The inspection team agrees with the parents that the school expects the pupils to do their best. Most pupils do make satisfactory progress in school and teaching is better than at the previous inspection. Whilst parents think it is good, inspectors find teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form: some teaching could be more inspirational. Children do like school and are perceptive in their comments about its strengths and weaknesses. The school's newsletters and reports to parents do keep them well informed on many matters, but there have been occasions when consultations on, for example, uniform and the organisation of the school day were unsatisfactory; the school could have worked more closely with parents in these matters. Inspectors disagree with parents on the range of out-of-school activities available, finding there to be an impressive range on offer. Inspection findings show that homework makes a good contribution to pupils' learning: very good in the sixth form.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11-18 comprehensive school has 145 students, and is growing. Only a few students in Year 12 do not continue into Year 13. It provides a good range of A-level subjects and an expanding range of Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) programmes. A few students join the sixth form from other schools. The 16+ examination results are above average and most students follow a two-year programme leading to A-level or AVCE programmes.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and cost effective. It provides a good variety of courses, which cater for the increasingly wide range of students' previous academic backgrounds. Good links with the local college have helped to provide this range of programmes. The curriculum is inclusive and ensures equality of access and opportunity. Teaching in the sixth form is good.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good. Students work hard and respond well to teaching based on very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Relationships between students and teachers are mostly very good. Students are confident and articulate.
- Students are well supported by the director of post-16, their tutors and subject teachers; their progress is monitored closely.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The director of post-16 works effectively to identify key priorities for the development of the sixth form.
- Attendance is excellent and the procedures for monitoring it are very good.
- Links with the local college of further education are good and improving. This co-operation is widening the curriculum available to students.

What could be improved

- The sixth form accommodation is cramped for the increasing numbers of students.
- The provision for religious education in Years 12 and 13 does not meet statutory requirements.

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.

English	Good. There is a good choice of courses to A and AS-levels. Good teaching and learning produce above average higher grade A-level results; results overall are average.
Art	Satisfactory. A-level results over the period 1998-2000 have been broadly average. In 2001 two-thirds of candidates gained A and B grades. AS level results in 2001 were less good with most gaining grade C and below. Teaching is good, but accommodation and storage for ongoing work are poor.
Business studies	Good. This course benefits from good teaching, which leads to good learning. In order for further improvements to be made the line management arrangements need to be more clearly established, the accommodation used needs to be improved and the quantity and quality of resources need improving. Standards in Year 13 are above average, but are below average in Year 12, owing to unsatisfactory attitudes amongst some boys.
Mathematics	Good. Standards are above average and teaching is good, based on strong knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. Students work hard and enjoy mathematics.
History	Very good. As a result of the impact of new management the students' current achievement is very high and well above the standards shown by previous examination results. The quality of teaching coupled with very good subject knowledge ensures that students are challenged to read widely and think deeply in making their judgements.
Information technology	Good. Teaching is good and is based on excellent subject knowledge. Students show maturity and responsibility and work hard. They reach average standards; this represents very good progress considering the poor provision that had been made in Years 7 to 11.
Physical education	Satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students are interested in and have a positive attitude towards physical education. Standards are average.
Physics	Good. Standards are above average. Good teaching makes sure the students learn well. They are really challenged by the teachers' enthusiasm, based on very good subject knowledge.
Travel and Tourism	Good. This course is well organised and learning is good because of the good teaching and the very good assessment techniques that are used. Standards are average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Arrangements for advice and guidance are well co-ordinated by the head of the sixth form. The quality of education and guidance for future courses and career opportunities are good. Very close monitoring maintains excellent attendance, and identifies problems early.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The director of post-16 has been in post just over a year and has already made a strong, positive impact. Priorities are clearly identified and appropriate action taken. The viability of small groups is carefully monitored. The carefully-planned curriculum meets well the needs of the increasing numbers in the sixth form.

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"> • Good induction, and advice and information on courses to study in the sixth form. • Teachers know them well and provide very good support. • Relationships are very good. • The leadership, support and guidance of the director of post-16. • They are taught well and expected to work hard. • The range of activities, particularly the physical education programme, in Year 12. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ways the school listens to the sixth formers and treats them as responsible young adults: monitoring attendance showed a lack of trust. • Information on progress was insufficient. • Sixth form accommodation is increasingly cramped as the numbers increase. • The programme for enrichment studies in Year 13.

One-third of the students responded to the questionnaire and many talked individually or in small groups with inspectors about their experiences. In conversations, students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of courses available to them and the guidance and support they receive. Written responses are less enthusiastic, with particular reservations about the information they receive on their progress and a lack of consultation with them. Inspectors find that the strengths identified by students are well founded. Increasing rigour, intended to raise standards, is the main reason for the adverse comments with which inspectors do not agree. Teaching and learning are good. The school recognises students' increased maturity in the way the sixth form is organised, and through the effective operation of the sixth form council. The tightened monitoring procedures have resulted in excellent attendance rates and improving achievement. The Year 12 personal and social education programme works well, as does the provision for sporting activities. The purpose of the Year 13 enrichment programme has been carefully thought through, but many students find it difficult to work within the flexible structure, and consequently do not make enough progress. Their reservations about its usefulness are unfounded. The sixth form common room and library are becoming crowded.

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. The attainment of 11 year-olds, when they start the school, is above average. From then on they achieve satisfactorily, attaining, as 14 year-olds, well above average standards in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. Standards in other subjects are mainly in line with expectations: overall attainment is above average. They also attain above average standards in GCSE when they reach 16 years of age. Average point scores for GCSE results, in subjects taken by all pupils, have, since the previous inspection, risen at a faster rate than the national trend of improvement. In 2000, average point scores were well above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. Boys' underachievement and some underachievement amongst middle and low attainers are main concerns of which the school is fully aware and is working to overcome. The well above average points scores are the positive side of a policy of entering very nearly all pupils for at least 10 GCSE examinations. Because some are over stretched, they obtain fewer higher grades than they might.
2. A result of the good close analysis of results is a proposal to reduce the numbers of subjects for which candidates are entered, as a means of increasing the pupils' chances of obtaining higher grades. The school uses a substantial national data bank to predict each individual's attainment; generally, pupils meet the predictions satisfactorily. Some, mainly high attainers, outstrip their anticipated standards by substantial margins and do very well. On the other hand, some, mainly middle and lower attainers, fail to reach the standards predicted for them. Rises in GCSE higher-grade pass rates in French, art and history and big improvements in English national test results in 2001 compared with previous years exemplify the success of measures taken to overcome identified weaknesses.
3. Weaknesses in literacy are a major reason for underachievement. The pattern of the school's results, both amongst 14 year-olds and 16 year-olds shows clearly that the pupils do better in subjects such as mathematics and design and technology that make fewer demands on extended, accurate writing. Recent GCSE history results indicate that the pupils are able to write accurately at length when good teaching ensures they have a lot of practice in the technical aspects of the subject. Boys' performance in higher-grade ranges is, however, below par in this subject too.
4. In 2000, results at the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds produced well above national average performances in English, mathematics and science combined. Performances were average when compared with results obtained by pupils in similar schools. The trend of improvement since the previous inspection was, from available figures, just below the national trend. The pupils did best in mathematics and science where standards were well above national averages and above average compared with similar schools. Attainment in English was above average nationally, but below average compared with similar schools. Literacy deficiencies undermine standards in this subject more than in the other two. Results in 2001 were very substantially better because of an up-turn in English results. They are likely to be well above average compared with similar schools. In mathematics, the proportions of pupils attaining levels much higher than expected, at least Level 7, rose significantly. Current standards of these same pupils, now in Year 10, bear out these improvements. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is less noticeable at this stage; when each of the three subjects are taken together, both sexes exceed the national average for their age group by identical amounts. Girls,

however, did slightly better than did the boys in English.

5. Other than in English, mathematics and science where they were above average, the standards of 14 year-olds were, according to teacher assessments in 2000, below average in art, history and ICT (information and communication technology). They were in line with national expectations in the other subjects. Considering the above average attainment profile on entry, this represented unsatisfactory progress in most subjects from Year 7 to Year 9. Teacher assessments in 2001 were higher because there had been substantial changes in staff and closer monitoring of quality and attainment. ICT had also been introduced into the curriculum and pupils were making rapid progress, but their standards in this subject were still below expectations at this stage. Generally, inspection findings are that current standards are above those indicated by teacher assessments, especially in history and design and technology.
6. Achievement in English lessons is satisfactory between Year 7 and Year 9. The pupils improve their reading aloud skills, understanding texts well. They are able to talk confidently and they listen well. Writing develops satisfactorily for most, as they learn to write for different readerships. However, weaknesses in punctuation, spellings and sentence construction undermine the quality of writing for too many pupils, including some who, otherwise, have good skills. Achievement is good in mathematics, because pupils behave well; they partake willingly in discussions and work hard. A few lower attaining pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable, often as a result of immature behaviour in class. Although standards in science are above average overall, weaknesses in investigations undermine attainment. Pupils lack confidence in this aspect of the subject, relying too much on the teacher to tell them how to proceed. Inconsistent marking of work also contributes to achievement that, whilst satisfactory, could be better.
7. Achievement in lessons between Years 7 and 9 is improving in art; new teachers are providing better yardsticks and stimuli for learning, so standards, for instance associated with printmaking, are rising. Evidence from the inspection shows that achievement and attainment are above average in design and technology. The pupils learn quickly the importance of design and they research, design and make products well, so finished work is of a good quality. Satisfactory map reading skills and improving skills of retrieval from written texts occur in geography. Lower attainers find it hard to write at any length; they describe phenomena, but fail to explain them: progress overall in geography is unsatisfactory. Achievement in history is in line with expectations. A strong emphasis on improving literacy skills contributes well to the pupils' rising achievement. Good achievement in ICT is within a narrow range of skills that are assessed very carefully to show the pupils how well they are doing. In modern foreign languages, pupils are willing to try to speak French and they listen intently; achievement is satisfactory. Writing is the weakest aspect of their work in this subject and, for some, pronunciation proves very difficult. By Year 9, the higher attainers are adept at asking questions of their peers, using some different tenses appropriately. Inconsistent teaching means that achievement in music is erratic. The pupils find it hard to follow mechanical exercises; they do better when they sing and make music themselves. Achievement in physical education is good, especially in rugby, soccer and basketball, where appropriate, handling, running and understanding of the game are above expectations. In religious education, the pupils have a good grasp of the main beliefs and practices and are able to discuss with enthusiasm matters that go beyond easy explanations.
8. Satisfactory achievement through Years 10 and 11 produces above national average proportions of pupils obtaining five or more higher grade, A*-C, GCSE results. In 2000, average point scores in the examination were well above the national average

and were above the average for similar schools. The girls did better than did the boys, exceeding by a greater margin than that of the boys the national average point score for their gender. Since the previous inspection, the upward trend in average point scores was above the national trend of improvement.

9. The good point score averages in 2000 contrast, to an extent, with the percentages of the candidates achieving five or more pass grades, A*-G that are nonetheless above average. Also, the proportions achieving five or more, higher grades, A*-C, whilst above it, are much closer to the national average. When comparisons are made with similar schools then the progress pupils make in Years 10 and 11 is below average for those achieving five or more higher grades, A*-C. The proportions obtaining five or more higher grades fell slightly in 2001. The value the school adds to pupils' education at this stage, and earlier is improving, but could be better. Although results in some subjects improved in 2001, they declined in others; the overall pattern of results shows that there is still room for improvement. Most pupils reached the standards their previous attainment suggested they would, but not enough made significant gains above such predictions. The best improvements were in subjects where particular attention had been paid to improving standards. Compared with 2000, there was a small decline in the combined results in English, mathematics and science. There is greater underachievement in English than in the other subjects; only half of the candidates reached their predicted minimum improvement grade in 2001. Many more showed greater improvements in mathematics and science. The school acknowledges the scope to do better and inspection findings suggest that measures being taken are starting to prove successful. The school did not meet its GCSE targets in 2000 or in 2001. Current, reasonably ambitious targets appear achievable.
10. The pupils did well in GCSE design and technology, physical education, dance, business studies and German. Changed subject leadership in history has brought greater rigour and enjoyment to the learning of the subject, raising its popularity: there were significant improvements in 2001 compared with a year earlier. There are good improvements since the previous inspection in results in art and, to a lesser extent, in French. Some small improvements have occurred in geography, but the subject remains one of the weakest.
11. Currently, the pupils' achievement in lessons through Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Progress for a number is inhibited by continuing weaknesses in literacy skills and in the comparative lack of opportunity to improve their learning through the regular use of ICT.
12. In English, the pupils' speech is confident, their listening purposeful and reading skills develop well. Writing improves: its organisation shows an ability to make constructive arguments. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily against their prior attainment. However, spelling errors and grammatical mistakes spoil the writing of many and this contributes to underachievement in GCSE. Girls' achievement outstrips that of the boys in this subject. This is not the case in mathematics where there is little difference between the two. Pupils' achievement is very good. They increase their skills and knowledge well; they speak interestedly about their work, aware of why they are using given methods to solve a challenge. Higher attainers gain a very good foundation in algebra and others can operate using a wide range of relevant techniques. It is the lower attainers' literacy skills that are their downfall; they practise basic number well, but have problems when writing rather than using numbers. In science, satisfactory achievement shows through the pupils' greater confidence in working independently. There are weaknesses in the inconsistent, sometimes inaccurate, ways work is corrected and in too little emphasis on writing practice. As a result, achievement is lower than it should be.

13. Achievement in art is currently unsatisfactory in Year 11 because the range of work is too limited and the pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory. Improvements in Year 10 show standards that are nearer to those expected, especially in drawing. Girls do better in detailed investigations in design and technology than do boys, although the achievement of both is good and they have the potential to do well. In geography, achievement is satisfactory for most, although weak writing skills hamper the progress of some lower attainers. Many pupils are able to make notes and use geographic models in their coursework well. Analysis techniques are rudimentary at best. In history, pupils are prepared very efficiently for their examinations. Achievement is good because the teachers place a strong emphasis on raising literacy standards around the subject. Although attainment is below average, achievement in ICT is good, as the pupils make up learning lost through unsatisfactory provision in their earlier years. Most can use the numeric keypad and type using two hands, working with commercial programs with some ease. Standards in French are higher than indicated by examination results; high attainers are able to write extensively and to express their own opinions. Some find pronunciation hard and lower attainers make elementary errors. In German, the pupils have an extensive vocabulary and knowledge of grammatical constructions. In music, the pupils listen carefully and are willing to discuss, but lack confidence in using musical vocabulary appropriately. Staffing problems in the recent past have undermined achievement. Achievement in physical education continues to be above average in each of the sports practised and in GCSE theory lessons. Techniques and skills develop well. In religious education, pupils make good progress despite the late starts made to the short course studied. Spurred on by the good teaching, pupils write confidently and clearly after serious research, some producing very good coursework.
14. Pupils with special educational needs usually attain the standards their teachers expect of them. In Years 9 to 11 most pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in those lessons where the teacher has taken their needs fully into account when planning the lesson. For example, in a Year 11 ICT lesson on PowerPoint demonstrations, pupils made excellent progress in developing new ideas and creative applications in an action packed hour of discussion, learning and practical application. Pupils also make good progress in lessons with classroom support, as the good rapport with the learning support assistants gives them the confidence to achieve well. However, a very few pupils who have behavioural difficulties make slower progress because they are inconsistent in their attitudes to work and find it hard to concentrate for any length of time. At present, there are no sixth form students who are on the special educational needs register. The one pupil who has English as an additional language is fluent in English.
15. Overall standards of literacy are average. Without an agreed policy for raising standards through the work of all subjects and no consistently used error correction strategy, improvements are restricted to individual initiatives. Key words are often displayed in classrooms, to satisfactory effect in most cases. Regular opportunities to write at length are too few before Year 10. Reading aloud is limited to English, modern foreign languages and religious education. There is evidence of pupils demonstrating growing confidence and fluency as they move through the school, but weaknesses do affect successes at GCSE. Only in English are the full range of literacy improvement opportunities provided for all pupils.
16. On the other hand, standards in numeracy are well above average. There is no whole school policy on numeracy, but its absence has not affected progress, as these skills are generally strong. For example, Year 9 pupils interpret and evaluate statistical information in history and they can apply concepts well in design and technology. Pupils measure accurately, weigh ingredients in food technology and produce drawings and plans to scale. In geography, pupils handle basic number work well, but

they are not taught simple correlation techniques. Numeracy skills help progress in science where, for instance, the pupils calculate well percentages in Years 7 to 9; ratios in Years 10 and 11 and they transpose formulae in Years 12 and 13.

17. The use of ICT in the other subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped because of a lack of rooms and computers until very recently. There is no clear assessment of students' ICT in other subjects. Applications lack co-ordination and the part ICT plays in improving skills and learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. At present, pupils use spreadsheets and word processing to improve the presentation of their written work in English, geography, history and science. Use of the Internet is sporadic before the sixth form. In English, for example, they have sought critical comment on a variety of authors and specifically have researched the life and times of Mary Shelley. In business studies, they have researched sensibly into company details as part of an analysis of changing industrial management structures. Use in science is limited to occasional simulations and solving problems that involve finding patterns within a large mass of data. In design and technology, students write simple control programs to analyse input and output systems. In mathematics, students use ICT to provide graphics illustrations to answers. Very limited use is made of ICT in art, history, modern foreign languages and music.

Sixth form

18. In 2000, the average A/AS level points score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A-levels or AS equivalents was above the national average: this was also the case over the last three years. In 2000, the girls did much better than the boys, but in 2001, the situation was reversed. Below national average point scores were recorded for the small numbers of students entered for Advanced GNVQs. No candidates were entered for other vocational courses during that period.
19. Allowing for the open access to the sixth form, attainment at the start is above average. Recent A-level standards have been below what could reasonably be expected. In both 2000 and 2001, value-added analysis shows that too many students fail to reach minimum expected improvements over their prior performance at GCSE. To help improve this situation, the school is tracking students' progress more closely. Good teaching and the students' very good attitudes to learning contribute significantly to the students' now satisfactory achievement in class. The improved breadth of learning opportunities also helps to raise standards. In the sixth form many students attain good research skills, through extended reading of relevant texts; they have good numeracy skills and their use of ICT to help learning improves well considering their lack of experiences beforehand in the school.
20. Compared with all maintained schools, the students did best in A-levels in 2000 in art, chemistry, design and technology and sociology where results were well above average. Results were above average in mathematics and geography; they were average in English and home economics and below average in all other subjects.
21. In English, students gain examination results that match expectation based upon earlier assessments of their attainment. Particular strengths are their ability to draw upon relevant material and to present opinions clearly supported by appropriate evidence. Students develop good research skills, including very good use of the Internet, with no evidence of plagiarism. Year 12 Language students are developing an appropriate interest in the origins and varieties of English. Uncertainties about differences between regional dialects and slang, although perhaps acceptable at this early stage of the course, should be clarified as a matter of urgency.

22. Standards of English work seen during the inspection are average. Students in Year 12 use electronic and printed text effectively for research; they report findings and judgements confidently to classmates. Written work shows a mature grasp of material and a confident expression of personal opinion. Students in Year 13, who are fluent and confident in discussion, understand the importance of supporting their opinions by reference to evidence.
23. Mathematics students enter the sixth form with a wide range of mathematical skills and knowledge and some of the courses are unsuitable for the lower attainers. The 2001 AS results indicated this.
24. In mathematics lessons, higher attainers acquire very good technical skills, and develop a high level of critical thinking. They take on new ideas well and apply them to more complex situations. Average attaining students reach standards that are a little above national averages. Lower attainers have difficulty in interpreting problems stated in a slightly different way to the ones they are used to. Some do not reach a pass grade level.
25. Standards of Year 12 physics students are average. The students use specialist terms confidently. They have limited experience with data logging and data analysis lower down the school and, therefore, do not evaluate the quality of data they have obtained and the procedures they have used well enough. Students in Year 13 design their own investigations, and work well independently on computer simulations. They participate successfully in competitive presentations. Students apply physics ideas confidently to real-world problems, for example, when interpreting graphs. Students do not have sufficiently rapid reading techniques when investigating experimental design choices and when referring to the data and experimental methods used by others.
26. In business studies, there is a marked difference between the below average standards in Year 12 and standards in Year 13 that are above average. Some immature boys reduce overall standards, whilst some girls achieve well through hard work. Year 13 students have a good basic understanding of business. They use relevant terms and analytical skills appropriately, achieving well.
27. Standards of ICT work seen during the inspection are average. Students taking the AS course have a good grasp of PowerPoint, some with a good awareness of target audiences. Students make good use of a range of fonts, lay out and colour and documents. Many students are working below expected levels in using spreadsheets, as they have not been taught this previously in the school. A2 students have made extensive use of clip art, the Internet and a wide range of font styles to create attractive and informative booklets. They understand the issues about economics of different print runs and quality.
28. Standards of work in physical education are average. Students understand planes of movement in specific sports. In badminton there is a range of attainment; over half the group is at the standard expected, although some students are below this. All students improve the evaluation of practical performances satisfactorily.
29. The evidence from art lessons and students' folders shows above average standards in Year 13. Students exploit and develop different combinations of media in their work well. Standards are above average when using a similar approach to sketchbook work. Drawing as a basic part of research and investigation is average. The work of students who have just started the AS level course in Year 12 is also average. Here drawing, as means of researching imagery, is not as good as it should be. The standard of the personal study aspect of the course is average. All can draw

conclusions and can speculate intelligently about the intentions of artists. In discussion, students, speak confidently about their work.

30. Standards of work seen in history are high. This is mainly because good teaching that continues to stress the acquisition of important literacy and research skills. Good, supportive reading helps students effectively in debating historical judgements. A good feature of a Year 13 lesson on Mary I was the high level of understanding that arose from the students' reading in depth.
31. There is a very good emphasis on numeracy in the AVCE travel and tourism course. The advice given on the presentation of graphs leads to improved standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

32. Pupils' attitudes to their work and the school are good overall. Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are keen to come to school. They take pride in the school and are enthusiastic about their own achievements and interests. They are eager to answer questions and often have sufficient confidence to ask their own. They enjoy learning. The great majority of pupils are friendly and courteous to each other, staff and visitors.
33. In lessons pupils are attentive and the majority undertake all the tasks required of them. The great majority of pupils are able to sustain their concentration well. They respond best in lessons where teaching is well planned and structured. In some classes, the difficult behaviour of a few pupils adversely affects the learning of the rest especially where teachers lack expertise in dealing with pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour.
34. Pupils' behaviour overall is good and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. When pupils make visits outside school their behaviour is very good and this enables staff to arrange stimulating visits and learning opportunities for pupils including work experience, residential weeks, and foreign visits. Relationships between pupils and staff and pupils with each other are often good and sometimes very good.
35. The high quality of relationships enables staff to offer pupils a level of care and guidance which makes a significant contribution to their social development, minimising racial disharmony and bullying. However, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils causes concern. A few incidents of unacceptable behaviour in lessons were noted during the inspection and, although these incidents were dealt with effectively, they sometimes adversely affected the learning of other pupils, especially in lessons taught by less experienced staff. Overall the school provides an orderly environment conducive to learning.
36. The school has a behaviour policy and this provides a range of appropriate sanctions and rewards. However, it is not always effective in modifying the behaviour of the small minority of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviours. Other pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to their work and to school life in general. They usually behave sensibly and have good relationships with their teachers and fellow pupils. They respond well to the care they receive.
37. All staff offer good role models for pupils and the great majority of pupils respect them. They encourage pupils to consider the consequences of their actions on themselves and others. Pupils regularly get out and put away equipment and volunteer for tasks. Pupils are proud to take on responsible roles such as senior pupils and members of

the school council. Pupils like helping the school's receptionist and many pupils returned for an open evening during the inspection week to act as hosts and guides to prospective pupils and their families. In school, pupils are willing to take on other responsibilities for example as student technicians in ICT lessons where they not only carry out maintenance functions on the network but also help teachers in lessons. Pupils are given many opportunities for collaborative working and are encouraged to develop their abilities to learn independently using the library and increasingly the Internet. Pupils are ready to help each other with their learning; in one Year 9 lesson one pupil helped another - unprompted by the teacher - to complete a worksheet on volcanoes.

38. In the last academic year, 40 pupils were excluded for fixed periods and 31 of these pupils had special educational needs; the use of fixed term exclusions for more serious offences is justified. Pupils are excluded for physical assault, verbal abuse and repeated misbehaviour. Exclusions are appropriately recorded and monitored. On re-admission to school pupils follow a programme of reintegration. No pupils have been excluded permanently for over two years. Pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion are able to access either part-time programmes of education involving the school and pupil referral unit or attend the local college on special programmes of study negotiated by the school.
39. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. In the last academic year, unauthorised absence increased significantly because of improvements in recording absence. However, as a result of improved systems of recording and close liaison with the education welfare service, unauthorised absence has returned to a more acceptable level. There is very little truancy from lessons. Lessons start on time although pupils are sometimes late for lessons as they move around the school to reach other classrooms.

Sixth form

40. Students' attitudes to the school are very good. They are interested in their courses and keen to participate in classroom activities and discussions with enthusiasm. They ask and answer questions readily. They are able to explore new ideas and often present their own with confidence and originality. By the beginning of Year 13, students are developing their own abilities to think independently.
41. A meeting of the sixth form council was held during the inspection and this showed how students could organise social events and discuss how to support Afghan refugees through a sponsored 'famine'. Students enjoy their lessons and the high levels of attendance demonstrate their commitment to the school and their courses. Sixth formers are also active in assisting younger pupils settle into the school through the anti-bullying campaign. They also help pupils in Year 7 improve their literacy skills through paired reading.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

42. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are slightly better, however, with the older pupils. Generally, the teachers manage the pupils well and the parents' supportive views of the quality of teaching are correct. There are good improvements since the previous inspection; of the 184 lessons evaluated teaching and learning are now unsatisfactory in four per cent compared with about 20 per cent then. The clear reduction in unsatisfactory teaching and learning is with the younger pupils particularly. No subject is now unsatisfactorily taught. The school's work to improve teaching quality through a good performance management system and monitoring of quality is proving successful; this has been achieved against a background of increases in the

proportion of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Teachers work very hard, especially in classes that have several of these pupils. The biggest improvements are in subjects where the school has arranged changes in personnel, for example art, religious education and music, or has lent most help. Support from outside experts, for example, has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning in French, which is now satisfactory.

43. The proportion of very good or better teaching and learning is greater in Years 10 and 11 than earlier; just over 20 per cent of the lessons with these older pupils fell into this category, with just over 10 per cent amongst the younger age range. Teaching and learning of good quality occurred in a further 40 per cent of lessons involving younger pupils and about the same with the older ones. Teaching and learning that was satisfactory occurred in the remaining 40 per cent of lessons with 11 to 14 year-olds and in 33 per cent of those with older pupils. There is a trough in Year 8, where over half the teaching lacks the sparkle that makes for good learning. Work scrutiny reinforces these results, with some improvements as the pupils near GCSE. The overall quality of correction of work is satisfactory, but there is some excellent marking, for example in religious education, that not only analyses carefully how well the pupil has done the work, but what is required to improve further. Some classes have more than one teacher and this undermines standards, for example in geography, when the teachers involved do not collaborate well enough to overcome the resulting lack of continuity.
44. All aspects of learning are satisfactory, as are the teachers' expectations, planning, teaching methods and use of support staff and time. Teachers assess the pupils' progress mainly satisfactorily during the lessons, and in the best instances, they do this very well indeed.
45. Teaching and learning do not profit enough from the pupils' good attitudes and behaviour in lessons. There are weaknesses common to much of the teaching that contribute to this. Except in mathematics, history and English, the main ones are in the unsatisfactory teaching of literacy and, even more widely, in the under-use of ICT to expand learning. As a result, the achievement of some middle and lower attaining pupils is not as good as their previous attainment level suggests it should be. Other, higher attainers are also penalised, as they do not make wide enough use of the range of learning devices available and their ICT skills are unsatisfactory. The school's commitment to educational inclusion, by accepting more than normal numbers of pupils with behavioural difficulties has, because the school has been unable to afford it, not been matched by enough suitable extra support for them to be in classes, without causing frequent disruption to others' learning. Teachers often have to spend disproportionate amounts of lesson time with these pupils to the detriment of the learning of others. Further weaknesses are in the absence of a commonly shared policy on teaching, learning and behaviour management with these pupils and no standardised ways of correcting written work. Since the school does not have consistently good marking procedures and accessible up to date records of current attainment, progress of individuals and classes is not well monitored.
46. Good teaching is now found in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all other subjects. The teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach make significant contributions to the improved quality.
47. Teachers of English describe effectively what constitutes different qualities of work, so the pupils learn how to improve their skills. The purposes of lessons are placed firmly into a context of what has been done before so pupils understand their

relevance. At the end, the main learning points of the lesson are suitably reinforced. Teachers make skilful use of questions to ensure that pupils understand and also to encourage them to think more deeply. Almost always, they expect pupils to explain their opinions or to show how they arrived at their judgements. Homework extends classwork well. Marking is often detailed, concluding with a summary of strengths and offering guidance for improvement, but it is not always of this high quality. In some lessons, the teacher's explanations are not sufficiently clear, pace is too slow and pupils' concentration falters.

48. The regular completion of effective homework is a good example of most pupils' positive attitudes to mathematics where a strong feature of the good teaching is the presentation of mathematical ideas and methods in a way that is appropriate for different groups of pupils. Pupils' marked work has good written feedback. Discussion in class on how to tackle the work helps pupils to achieve well. In all classes, there is a strong, successful emphasis on using the correct technical vocabulary. Expectations are high. In a high attaining class in Year 7, pupils were expected to be able to define, and understand, the difference between a formula and an algebraic expression. Very good teaching gets pupils to link different parts of mathematics and use what they have learned beforehand in new work. Too much time is sometimes spent with a small group of difficult pupils; this slows the progress of others, as they do not receive enough attention.
49. Science teaching overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers motivate their pupils well, challenge them and finally assess progress effectively. These characteristics were strong when in Year 9 pupils were investigating the speed of reactions and also in Year 10 when pupils were sorting chemicals into groups. Sometimes, however, teachers are too quick to tell the pupils what to do and how it should be done, so the pupils' planning of investigations is unsatisfactory and learning opportunities are missed.
50. In design and technology, a subject in which the pupils do well, teaching and learning are consistently good. Crisp introductions quickly set the scene and there is a good balance between teacher direction and pupils taking independent decisions about how their work is to proceed. This raises standards. Good planning and the thoughtful matching of work and resources to needs of pupils is a consistently good feature of teaching. Good use is made of ICT in this subject. In history, some excellent learning results from similar teaching that is characterised by very clear planning and consistent challenge to greater endeavour. Expectations are high and timing very effective. As a result, the pupils develop skills of evaluation and deduction. Lesson-end recapitulations give ample opportunity for the pupils to show what they have learned. Less effective teaching in this subject has slower pace and less exacting challenges. In such cases, pupils are less analytical and more factual in their work. Good teaching in ICT sets individual targets for completion and this allows the pupils to concentrate throughout the lesson, making good progress as a result. Teachers' knowledge and competence are such that they can get over electronic breakdown without undue disruption to learning. Physical education teachers question the pupils well and expect them to take some control of their learning, expecting them to evaluate their own and others' performances. The main characteristics of good religious education teaching are a clear commitment to improvement, good planning and positive relationships with the pupils that are helping to raise the profile of the subject in the school.
51. Satisfactory geography teaching makes sure a variety of activities and time allocation to them are appropriate, with teachers who are enthusiastic for the subject. Good inclusive questioning enlivens learning that, in most but not all lessons, is set in clearly defined objectives. Weaker teaching fails to create work to match the pupils'

attainment closely enough and, in some lessons, the teachers talk at much too great a length. The best teaching in modern foreign languages excites the pupils so their learning sometimes surprises them, for example in building up pictures of urban landscapes in German. Very effective use of French in a Year 11 class meant that the pupils' understanding of well metered poetry and aspects of life in cities was good enough to let them complete a demanding exercise based upon them. There are instances, however, where the work set does not match the pupils' attainment and so learning is less good. Clear introductions and demonstrations, with emphasis on the best materials to use characterise the better teaching in art. Weaknesses in basic classroom organisation inhibit some learning and the use of secondary rather than primary source leads to work that lacks depth. A clear focus on musical activity is not common to all music teaching. Some lessons focus excessively on technical exercises that have no immediate musical applications, so some pupils, boys in particular, do not learn well enough.

52. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily. Teachers have a sound knowledge of these pupils' needs and in subjects such as ICT they are successful in adapting their teaching methods and learning materials to pupils' requirements. However, these strategies are not adequately developed in geography and in some art and mathematics lessons. Pupils usually achieve well in small sets because the way of working meets their particular needs. This was the case in a mathematics withdrawal lesson in Year 7 where the effective teaching enabled pupils to make good progress in learning how to use negative numbers in recording rises and falls in temperature. Teachers work hard to give individual help to pupils in large classes, but progress is slow when there is no extra support and when teachers are not confident in managing challenging behaviour.

Sixth form

53. As at the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning is good. In the 45 evaluated lessons, teaching and learning were very good or better in 22 per cent; they were good in a further 60 per cent and satisfactory in another 18 per cent. Unsatisfactory work was found in just two per cent of the total. There is much more good teaching and learning in the sixth form than in the other years. An improvement occurs between Year 12 and Year 13.
54. The teachers' very good subject knowledge is, at this level, often well channelled to stimulate the students to think well for themselves and to conduct personal research, from which they benefit. The teachers' helpful, analytical comments in the correction of work exemplify the best teaching found. Students are strongly motivated, in the main, though some reluctant ones, boys in particular, are found in subjects such as business studies in Year 12. The students' very good attitudes contribute substantially to the good learning quality. Good teaching challenges the students to spark off each other and to argue a case. Maturity increases from Year 12 to Year 13, so the students' use of extra learning resources, for example ICT, improves and their progress benefits. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. Homework plays a very good part in helping the students to learn; they use the range of resources available very well, including ICT and the Internet.
55. Good English teaching is typified by encouragement to students to deepen their thinking by answering very challenging questions, for instance on Shakespearean sonnets in Year 13. In all lessons, students are expected to contribute actively to their learning. Sometimes, work is not explained clearly enough and on other occasions the pace of lessons is too slow, but there is no unsatisfactory teaching in this subject. Students learn well. The quality of their response shows: they become independent, more-mature learners.

56. Mathematics teaching is also good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and the course; they understand how to help students to learn. In common with the way mathematics are successfully taught in Years 7 to 11, everyday examples and applications are used to promote learning and appreciation. Key points are well illustrated, for instance by the use of concrete exemplars in a discussion on variables. The lessons have good pace and challenge; good individual support assists those who find difficulties. Higher attainers approach questions in a more abstract way, whilst lower attainers follow a methodical approach to solving problems. Students' learning skills are good; they debate willingly and effectively amongst themselves to find possible solutions. Teachers help them by posing specific questions to channel their thinking in suitable directions.
57. Good science teaching effectively includes all students by starting with easy ideas and building on them. The students' confidence grows, but they are unable to do without their teachers upon whom they rely sometimes too much. However, the teachers use analogies very effectively to get the students thinking. The best teaching had enthusiasm, humour and the shared acceptance that learning would be through the applications, for instance of physics, to everyday modern living. Teachers provide very good support to improve the students' answering of written questions, use of spreadsheets, calculations and investigations of relationships between variables in a formula. The students' confidence increases and they become better independent learners.
58. Of the other subjects, teaching and learning are very good in history, drama and ICT. Students are seen as responsible young adults. They respond well to that in each subject. The history teacher's high level of subject knowledge stimulates in-depth discussion through demanding, developmental questions, for example on the use of propaganda. As a result, the students' improving analytical skills and confidence allow them to make very good presentations to the rest of the class. Teachers' good marking of students' written work and the associated debriefings are firmly based on the careful assessment of each student's work. Mature, detailed discussion of how a devised performance could be most effectively presented characterises very good drama lessons. ICT teachers' excellent subject knowledge give students what they need to make very good progress in a good, purposeful working atmosphere, so they begin to make up the leeway of no taught ICT in earlier years. ICT teachers create opportunities for higher attaining students to extend their interests by providing more extensive bibliographies on specific topics. Good assessments of project work help students make very good progress in the subject.
59. Teaching in media studies is also characterised by skilful questioning that encourages students to explore issues and reach their own conclusions. Art teaching and learning are good because a suitable methodology balances visual research and the development of ideas, so the students know what they have to do. In Year 13, the art teacher acts effectively as advisor and technical instructor, making the students have a good deal of independence that motivates them and produces above average attainment. The good quality of travel and tourism teaching, drawing on relevant industrial experience, fosters good learning in an appropriate vocational context. The quality of teaching in business studies is good. In the best lessons, challenging work produces independent working and the students use the Internet and other sources well to undertake research: learning is good. Learning in Year 12 is constrained by the immature attitudes of some boys who trivialise the work and cannot apply theories or analyse outcomes, so learning is unsatisfactory. Their written work is also unsatisfactory, as they are unable to write analytically.

60. Techniques of manufacture are well taught in design and technology. The painstaking production of garments and attention to detail and finish exemplify a common expectation of high standards. Good teaching in German is characterised by high demands on the students to produce grammatically correct work that reflects the teacher's own very good command of the language. Teaching is satisfactory in physical education where, occasionally, pace is restricted because the students are given too many notes to make.

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

61. Overall the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 provides a satisfactory range and balance of compulsory and optional courses and is accessible to all pupils. The planning and co-ordination of ICT, part of a key issue in the previous report, have improved, but in some subject areas pupils still do not have sufficient planned opportunities to improve their computer skills.
62. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils study the full National Curriculum as well as drama and religious education. The satisfactory personal and social education programme is currently taught during tutor time, and is not timetabled separately. German is successfully introduced for some pupils as an extra modern foreign language in Year 8. Banding and setting pupils by ability, provides a common curriculum, ensuring that all pupils are provided for appropriately whatever their aptitude, ethnicity or gender, apart from an issue over uneven class sizes. The curriculum has breadth, but the school timetable produces some undesirable effects on balance. Apart from uneven class sizes there is some imbalance in time allocation, as in Year 7, where physical education receives more time than science. Several groups are taught by more than one teacher for the same subject, thereby undermining continuity in learning.
63. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, but there are some weaknesses. In Year 10, pupils follow a course that includes a compulsory core of English, a modern foreign language, science, mathematics, physical education, technology and life skills. Pupils may then choose two optional courses. Option choices reflect traditional aspirations for boys and girls. Science has changed from double award science for all to single award science for some. Life skills cover religious education and personal and social education. The curriculum provides extra breadth with the inclusion of non-National Curriculum subjects such as business education, child development and drama. An ASDAN basic skills course is available for pupils who take a single science course and for those disapplied from modern foreign languages. The Year 11 curriculum is similar, but is being phased out to be replaced by the current Year 10 provision. Year 11 pupils could choose three optional courses. Religious education and personal and social education are timetabled separately. The physical education curriculum is restricted by the nature of the accommodation. Timetabling difficulties result in some lessons having to be taught outside the school day. One example is Latin, which provides welcome extra breadth to the curriculum, but cannot be accommodated in normal lesson times. Some shared teaching occurs in Year 11, in geography for example. As in Years 7 to 9, this is not helpful. Following evaluation, sensibly modified arrangements for GCSE entry mean that pupils now take an average of nine subjects rather than at least ten.
64. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils who are in need of extra help. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils on the special educational needs register. Pupils have good opportunities to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills through setting arrangements in English and mathematics. However, the teaching of basic literacy skills is unsatisfactory, as there is no agreed whole-school policy or practice

for the improvement of what is a significant weakness for some pupils, not only those with special educational needs. Targeted pupils also benefit from paired reading sessions and extra classes in English. The ASDAN course in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils with special educational needs to gain accreditation for a broad range of skills. Pupils' individual education plans have recently been revised to provide clear, precise targets and a more workable format. Although they are only available for pupils with statements of special educational need at the moment, they will shortly be available for all pupils who require them.

65. Sex and health education are covered effectively in science and religious education. The personal, social and health education programme is, however, undergoing review. In Years 7 to 9, it is taught partly by form tutors in extended registration time. This temporary situation is unsatisfactory because it results in non-specialist teaching of many strands, especially careers education and guidance in Year 9. A thorough audit of provision in this area has been completed and it is planned that what appears on paper as a very good programme of personal, social and health education will be fully in place in Years 7 to 9 in the next academic year. Provision in Years 10 and 11 is good, and by next year the well-planned life skills course will be taught in both years. Careers education is well provided for in Years 10 and 11, and includes a good work experience programme in Year 11 that through good planning overcame the difficulties presented by the foot and mouth outbreak in recent months.
66. The school has recently begun to identify gifted and talented pupils. There is as yet no coherent policy or consistency of treatment of these pupils across all subject areas.
67. The school's lengthy list of out-of-school activities and opportunities testifies to the good provision in this area. There are competitive and participatory team games and activities, practices, matches and clubs at most lunch times and after school as well as several sporting fixtures on Saturdays. Music activities include choirs, ensembles, an orchestra and jazz and rock groups. Pupils are regular participants in local festivals, a carol service and musical productions. Many out of school activities are linked to subject areas. There are several theatre and cinema visits organised by the English and drama teachers. Most subjects run clinics after school and there are residential trips both in this country and abroad run by the languages, geography, history and special needs departments and others.
68. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is also good. Apart from the good relationship with local employers through the work experience programme, there is close co-operation with the local college of further education in the running of the ASDAN course. Music, English and technology have strong links with the same college and many trips to local venues are helped by the co-operation of museums, galleries and a regional field centre.
69. Relationships with partner institutions are good overall, especially with further education. Links with partner primary schools are less good. The strength of the links varies between subjects but they are particularly good in science.
70. The school's response to criticisms of the main school curriculum made in the previous inspection report is incomplete. The teaching of ICT across the curriculum remains as a weakness. The school appreciates the weaknesses in the construction of the timetable and is planning amendments, as current arrangements result in unsatisfactory interruptions to learning in several subjects. Real improvements have been made in departmental planning for learning in most subjects, but weaknesses remain in geography.
71. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It

has improved since the previous inspection when it was unsatisfactory. The school has recently completed an audit of provision, which has served to raise awareness of how much each subject contributes. Subjects such as mathematics include audited opportunities in their scheme of work but others have yet to do so.

72. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Throughout the main school, religious education offers good opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual awareness, for example in discussions on prayer and near death experiences. There are some thought-provoking displays linking mathematics to art and natural phenomena, and aboriginal work in art encompasses a spiritual dimension. However, opportunities for spiritual development are lacking in music. The sixth form personal, social and health education programme includes spiritual issues with an emphasis on what is happening in today's world. The Christian Union has weekly meetings and the local vicar is a regular contributor to class discussions in personal and social education. Pupils take part in the formal commemoration service and the Christmas carol service. Assemblies are held for each year group and in these and in some of the daily tutor sessions there is time for quiet reflection. Nevertheless, the school does not provide a daily act of worship for all its pupils.
73. Moral education is good. Expectations about standards of behaviour are clear. Teachers are good role models and pupils are fully aware of the difference between right and wrong. Moral dilemmas relating to the sanctity of life are explored in religious education and environmental issues such as conservation and waste are regularly covered in design and technology. Some themes in art and in ICT have a strong moral dimension as, for example, the portrayal of the Seven Deadly Sins and the consequences of speeding on Lake Windermere. Sixth form students learn from visiting speakers about health and safety issues in eating disorders and in the misuse of alcohol and drugs. The school has an anti-bullying group and complaints about bullying can be made in confidence.
74. The provision for social development is very good. Pupils take part in team games and sports matches and a wide range of activities in music. In modern foreign languages, pupils are given very many opportunities to interact with each other, for example in classwork, in conversation sessions with the assistante and during the French trip to Normandy. Co-operative working also promotes the social development of pupils in subjects such as geography and art and drama. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to take on responsibility in different areas of school life. They can become form and sports captains, and members of the school council, and act as library assistants and receptionists. In technology subjects pupils have to accept responsibility for their own property and the safety of others and they develop self-reliance and initiative through taking part in The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Sixth form students have very good opportunities to help younger members of the school. They support pupils with special educational needs in the classroom and are tutors in the paired reading programme. As leaders of the school they organise discos and trips and enthusiastically raise money for charity. They also volunteer for community activities such as dog walking and dry stonewalling.
75. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school organises a comprehensive programme of visits, which are curriculum linked. For example, pupils have a wealth of opportunities for theatre, cinema and art gallery visits, and excursions to places of scientific and historical interest. There are opportunities for pupils to find out how the law is administered in the local courts. Out-of-school school clubs cater for a wide variety of interests, ranging from drama to computers and pupils can take advantage of the school's links with the local dry-slope ski facility. Pupils also benefit from field trips and residential visits. For example, Year 10 pupils on the ASDAN course spent a week taking part in team building activities, and sixth

form students studying history and modern foreign languages have visited Berlin. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of non-European cultures. However, in geography and religious education the study of other cultures is an integral part of the syllabus, and in design and technology pupils look at food from different cultures.

76. Pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities for personal development through activities which are designed to improve their social skills, such as groupwork in lessons, and teamwork in sports, field studies and outdoor pursuits. Residential courses give these pupils very good experience in showing initiative and working together constructively in challenging situations.

Sixth form

77. The sixth form curricular provision is good overall and is more comprehensive in scope than at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum provides very well for students' needs and, in association with the local college of further education, ensures that they receive good advice about where they can gain access to courses the school cannot offer. There are however, some weaknesses. The absence of religious education in Year 13 constitutes a statutory breach. Some parents are unhappy with the absence of timetabled provision for retake lessons in GCSE English and mathematics: in response, these are planned, through further collaboration with other providers, for the near future. Timetabling difficulties result in part of the geology course being taught after school.
78. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and its quality is improved through the effectiveness of close links with the local further education college. Through these and other links the school's curriculum provision responds well to local circumstances. Students' programmes are monitored to achieve coherence and planned to ensure that they build on existing knowledge and experience. The number of girls taking physical sciences in the sixth form is increasing well.
79. The school offers a total of up to 23 AS and A-level courses, some of them in subjects not taught in Years 7 to 11. According to the outcome of students' choices some of these courses are not run every year. In the current Year 13, a total of 19 A-level courses is taught. In addition to AS and A-level courses there are three AVCE courses and a physical education programme. There is a personal, social and health education programme that includes religious education in Year 12, and an enrichment programme in Year 13. Careers education and guidance are well provided for within these courses. Students benefit from the support and guidance of a personal tutor throughout their sixth form career. The University of Liverpool enrichment programme, which encourages students to become independent learners, is carried out in groups and is project based. If fully completed it can result in the award of UCAS points. Some students find the discipline entailed hard. Teaching of key skills is satisfactory. The programme has been reviewed and amended this year. Students are now exempted from the teaching of those skills that are covered by their other courses. Co-operation with the further education college in the running of the AVCE courses is reciprocated by further education students attending the school for A-level studies. Plans are in hand for a much wider ranging relationship with the college, which should lead to the joint provision of more vocational courses, both for sixth form students and pupils in the main school. The curriculum is inclusive and ensures equality of access and opportunity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

80. The school has sound arrangements for child protection and follows the policy laid

down by the local child protection committee. The deputy headteacher is the nominated person for child protection. Child protection records are now kept securely in a locked cupboard, as required by legislation. Good links exist with external agencies involved in child protection issues. Staff are fully aware of the importance of child protection and know the first steps to take if an instance arises.

81. Health and safety practice has improved since the previous inspection and satisfactory procedures are in place. No major hazards were noted during the inspection. Risk assessments have been completed for all areas of the school and these are reviewed at the start of the academic year.
82. The school ensures that sufficient staff are trained in First Aid procedures and the school nurse, who knows many pupils well, attends the school weekly. Pupils are screened in Year 7 and receive immunisation at appropriate times later in their school careers. Accidents to pupils and staff are properly recorded. Fire doors are fitted where necessary and signs installed in the main building identifying exits in case of evacuation. Fire equipment is in good condition and drills are held regularly.
83. The school's attendance clerk takes a close interest in ensuring that attendance is recorded accurately and that registers are kept in accordance with statutory requirements. However, the school could not provide reliable information for some classes for last summer term. Although class teachers record attendance appropriately, the school's lack of consistency in monitoring attendance consistently across classes and year groups is unsatisfactory. Computerised monitoring of attendance could assist the school in managing attendance and this should be introduced as soon as possible.
84. The school's behaviour policy sets out a range of sanctions and rewards but it is not linked sufficiently closely to teaching strategies in the classroom and is unsatisfactory in practice, as interruptions to learning are caused by a few pupils with behavioural difficulties. School rules are laid down in the Code of Conduct and pupils follow them. The school's policies for eliminating oppressive behaviour and bullying are good. Members of staff are alert to situations where bullying and harassment can arise and, according to pupils and parents, take prompt and effective action to stop it if it occurs. A small minority of pupils occasionally exhibit aggressive behaviour and, in this circumstance, physical restraint is applied using meticulously the LEA policy. Supervision of pupils at break and lunchtimes is satisfactory. Lunchtimes provide good opportunities for pupils to socialise and attend lunchtime clubs although litter is left around the school where it tends to accumulate in windy corners at the back of the school.
85. All members of staff know and understand the needs of pupils well and respond sensitively to them. The personal and social education programme contributes to pupils' personal development where it is taught. Personal and social education is not taught consistently across the school and teachers are left to cover these issues during the daily tutorial periods, sometimes without sufficient recourse to the guidance offered.
86. The school's pastoral system is effective in ensuring pupils' well-being in school. Pupils have a tutor for the year and this system works well by facilitating regular reviews of pupils' academic progress and personal development. Individual pupils giving cause for concern are discussed at regular meetings and personal targets revised if necessary.
87. The school makes good provision for the induction of pupils into the school and those

joining in Year 7 have the opportunity of attending a taster day. Arrangements for induction are supervised closely by the Head of Year 7 and have been designed to facilitate visits by staff to primary schools. These visits are reciprocal and appreciated not only by prospective pupils but also by staff in primary schools.

88. Overall the school cares satisfactorily for its pupils' welfare, health and safety, and provides a secure and safe environment for learning.

Assessment

89. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory. An overhauled reporting system has received favourable acclaim by most parents. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in most departments and it is good in design and technology, history and physical education. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory in music. In design and technology, assessment information is held centrally on computer by staff and this allows ready analysis of how each pupil is performing and staff can tell how well each pupil is achieving over time. The school also subscribes to a commercial scheme and pupils are increasingly being given minimum target grades in each of their subjects. These grades are based on standards previously achieved in the subject. The performance of each pupil is then monitored against these target grades. This system is still being developed and practice varies between departments, but the potential for further improvements exists. The use of assessment data to guide curricular planning and to raise achievement is similarly satisfactory and is developing well. It has already led to some enhancements of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. For example, some pupils who are struggling to make progress in the mainstream curriculum are offered opportunities to follow a more appropriate, vocationally biased, curriculum at the local college of further education. Such a provision gives this small group of pupils better opportunities to make progress in their studies.
90. The school monitors the performance of pupils with special educational needs in a satisfactory way. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils in need of extra help are effective, and the revised individual education plans give clear guidance on the kind of support which the pupil requires. Special action plans for intensive support are drawn up when necessary. Arrangements for monitoring behaviour and recording personal achievement are good. Support staff know pupils well and the good relationships, which they build up, make an important contribution towards the development of pupils' confidence and their general well-being. However, although the quality of support is good there is not enough of it. There is a good liaison between the school and its partner institutions, and this works to the benefit of pupils as they transfer from primary school and when they move on to further education.

Sixth form

Advice, support and guidance

91. The director of post-16 monitors the attendance of each student closely and these arrangements work excellently and result in excellent attendance. Arrangements for offering advice and guidance to sixth formers are well developed and co-ordinated by the director of post-16. The high quality of relationships between staff and students makes a very positive impact on the standard of education provided. Most students are taught in small groups and this enhances opportunities for staff to develop good relationships with students. The quality of education and guidance for future courses and career opportunities is good.

Assessment

92. The effectiveness of the school's use of assessment data to monitor the academic performance of students is satisfactory. All departments regularly assess work and departmental subject staff satisfactorily monitors progress. In some subjects, such as design and technology and in travel and tourism, assessment procedures are good and provide clear guidance to students on the strengths, or otherwise, of their work. Sixth form students are mainly satisfied with the marking of their work and the advice they are offered on how they might further improve their standards. Monitoring procedures across departments are being improved and sixth form tutors, and the director of post-16, are now starting to use assessment data as a means of predicting potential and tracking individual performances against target grades. Such use of data is new and is not deeply embedded at this stage, but it offers considerable potential as a tool to be used in the drive for higher standards. The support being offered to individual students has improved since the previous inspection and there has been some use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning. This is evidenced, for example, by the introduction of an advanced vocational course in travel and tourism. Much data is collected, from which the school identifies students who are or are not doing particularly well and the reasons why. Outcomes are shared with subjects in order to celebrate successes and to seek reasons for any slippage that is found. Attainment is rising as a result.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

93. Overall, the school's partnership with the parents is satisfactory. However, the school needs to develop strategies to encourage the wholehearted support of the school by a larger proportion of parents and carers, as relationships with some are, from the returned questionnaires and parents' evening comments, clearly unsatisfactory.
94. Parents visit the school and the headteacher and other staff make them feel welcome. They have positive views of the school although a significant minority has several concerns about deteriorating behaviour, excessive staff turnover and lack of information and consultation about changes to the school's arrangements and routines. These points are answered elsewhere in this report.
95. Parents and carers are invited to attend annual reviews and are consulted about individual education plans. They are also invited to consultation evenings where they can meet their child's teacher and these events are well supported by parents and carers. Parents and carers support school events such as prize giving, drama productions, carol concerts, and the popular sports evening held in the summer term. Parents and carers appreciate the monthly school's newsletter. The fundraising activities of the parents' association make an important contribution to school life. Homework diaries provide another means of communication between home and school. The school has sent home-school contracts to parents and these are still being returned to school.
96. Both the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents have omissions required by legislation; no reference is made to pupils' absence rates and the annual report omits comment on access for the disabled. Nevertheless both documents present a well-rounded picture of the school's activities. The sixth form has its own well-produced, informative prospectus for prospective students, parents and carers. The school issues an annual written report for each pupil and student that is clear and concise. The annual reports provide considerable detail on what pupils have studied and often set objectives for the following year although objective setting is inconsistent across the school.
97. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents contribute to the annual reviews of their children's progress and they are encouraged to discuss any concerns with the school management.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

98. With many improvements since the previous inspection, leadership and management are now satisfactory. A rejuvenated governing body that oversaw the change from voluntary-aided to foundation status picked up the significant weaknesses in leadership and management found by that inspection. Their appointment of a new headteacher, two years ago, marked a recognition that the school had to change. Given the brief of raising standards and eliminating the budget deficit, the new headteacher has worked hard, in collaboration with the governors, and has overcome much of the professional inertia met upon arrival. Beforehand, there was a lack of purposeful rigour in the way the school operated. The school is not yet, however, pulling fully in a single educational direction; pockets of resistance remain and there are some difficulties in persuading a proportion of the parents and staff that change is needed or beneficial.
99. The headteacher has been successful in redressing previously identified failings by, for example, drawing up a comprehensive improvement plan and delegating the

setting up of good performance management, rewards and reporting systems. Substantially improved collection and analysis of examination results now provides a newly reorganised line management structure with the basis of discussion with subject leaders. At the same time, some further key appointments of dynamic senior leaders have put the school into a very good position for further improvements. A particularly important factor is the way these new senior appointees' own teaching provides very good models of how to develop pupils' keenness to learn and how to get them to think about how to improve their learning.

100. There have been some beneficial outcomes following a restructuring of staff. The budget now balances and reshuffled responsibilities are having a direct influence on standards through, for instance, the way history is now led and managed. Middle management has other real strengths, for example in the new, very well run ICT department. These strengths complement established good leadership and management in mathematics and physical education. Leadership and management are satisfactory in all, except three, other subjects. They are unsatisfactory in English because the jobs associated with running this very large department are ill defined, so teaching and learning, for example, are not monitored closely enough. Unsatisfactory leadership is the main reason for standards in geography being amongst the lowest in the school: inconsistencies in marking, weak documentation and planning show a lack of monitoring and direction in the subject. Leadership is also unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages, as there are too many weaknesses in the ways the department's work is monitored.
101. The learning support department is well managed so the complex routines run smoothly. There is a good match of teaching staff to the needs of the department, but there are not enough learning support assistants for the needs of the disproportionately high number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties: this hampers progress in lessons. However, the timetable for available support has been efficiently worked out to make the best use of the available hours.
102. The school's aims and values reflect closely the wishes of parents. They were given strong support both at the parents' meeting and in the responses to the governors' questionnaire, where expectations of hard work and good progress brought over 90 per cent positive responses.
103. The headteacher's mark on the school is very clear: he is keen to make it one of the best. Curriculum evaluation has improved and extending collaboration with other local providers, especially further education, is extending the range of subjects available both to sixth formers and, through contracts, to a few low-attaining 14 to 16 year-olds. He has a clear, business-like philosophy of what the school should be able to achieve. Development plans detail the constituent parts of his ambition, but the immediate one fails to prioritise sufficiently and there is no clear mechanism to evaluate progress. Department plans are intended to match the school plan, but their interpretation is too diffuse, making it hard, for example, to focus spending on professional development and resources. Because it is so all embracing, the plan does not help line managers with their job; it does not sit easily enough with school improvement. A simple solution would be to agree the main area of concern from the menu and create a direct focus to which the whole school might contribute. Inspection evidence suggests teaching and learning, combined with behaviour management is the key to raising standards further.
104. The headteacher's very personal approach to leadership and management has served the school well so far. With the recently acquired strengths in personnel and the improved management structure, he is right to see the advantages in planning

strategically and giving others the jobs of providing the detail of intended policy and overseeing its implementation. The good performance management system means that teaching and learning are evaluated satisfactorily, with the headteacher playing a prominent part. The process is not used systematically within all departments to help share experiences and practice. Methods of communication are thorough but often too impersonal. Lengthy letters that react strongly to what could sometimes be minor issues show there is some way to go before there is a fully shared commitment, with parents and staff, to improve. The parent questionnaire responses had a very low agreement rate on the quality of information and the closeness with which the school works with parents. A well over 30 per cent disagreement with each premise is very high. When the good quality of the regular newsletters and reports is considered, such reservations come from misunderstandings that should be easy to repair.

105. The governors are active, critical friends, committed to school improvement and aware of its strengths and weaknesses. A main area of recent concern is, justifiably, raising the attainment of boys. They have played prominent parts in recent changes for the better, entering fully into relevant educational debate and supporting the headteacher's enterprise in improving facilities and widening associations with other establishments. They carry out their statutory duties in all respects, except the provision of religious education for all sixth formers and a daily act of collective worship. There are also minor omissions in their communications with parents.
106. With no common forum for middle managers, the production of policy has, over the last two years, been within the remit of volunteers and a few have felt excluded. The production of the final performance management policy is, nonetheless, a good example of successful delegation. On-going work by a group of interested teachers looking at assessment has not yet produced a paper, but newly-appointed leadership of the group promises more rapid action. The potential for staff involvement in planning policy is very good.
107. Staffing is satisfactory. There is a good match of teachers to the curriculum and the use of specialist college staff in the delivery of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 further helps this situation. Though some non-specialist staff is used in some subject areas, this does not cause any difficulties because they are effective teachers and they prepare well for their lessons. New members of staff undergo a comprehensive induction programme. Generally, newly appointed staff report that they are well supported, but force of circumstance, due to staffing changes, new music teachers feel isolated and largely unsupported, suggesting a flaw in line management. The search for IIP (Investor in People) status is leading to improvements in the training opportunities available to ancillary staff. Too frequently, teaching staff has to cope with many special needs pupils without assistance from learning support staff, affecting standards adversely in all Years from 7 to 11.
108. The school has invested appropriately in new buildings and refurbished others. Further projects include improved music accommodation and better provision for medical emergencies. The very good library, for example, provides a well-equipped and pleasant environment for learning that is used very well. However, there is still insufficient space for effective teaching in some subjects. Lessons in science and art are overcrowded and some drama and music lessons have to take place in the hall or dining room. Departmental accommodation for special educational needs is unsatisfactory: it is too cramped and is not accessible to wheelchairs, at present contravening the forthcoming Disability Discrimination Act. Whilst generally clean and graffiti free, unsightly amounts of litter accumulate on the site.
109. The overall level of resources is satisfactory; it is sufficient for the needs of Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form. The number of computers has increased and most

departments have sufficient books and other learning resources. Exceptions are in religious education, business studies and history, where there are not enough textbooks or there is a need to replace some. The previous report was critical of the school's small, uninviting and poorly stocked library. As a result of improvements, the library is now a large and attractive facility providing pupils and students with an excellent place to work. The library staff is enthusiastic and eager to help. The library is still some 1,500 books short of its target and the library staff expresses frustration because many departments are reticent in recommending new titles to be stocked. Thus, the potential of an excellent facility is not fully realised.

110. At the time of the previous inspection there was a deficit of over £100,000. From this low baseline, there has been considerable improvement. Good financial planning, often necessitating taking difficult decisions on staffing and resources, has been effective in reducing and removing this deficit. There was a small surplus to carry forward last year, and current projections show there will be a bigger one this year.
111. The school has very good systems for financial projection and monitoring. Together with the finance manager and the headteacher, the chairman of the governors' finance committee plays a key role in this. Governors receive good information from these well-managed systems and this enables them to get an accurate picture of the school's financial health. The latest audit confirmed that the school financial systems are effective.
112. The school meets the statutory requirements in respect of special educational needs and makes good strategic use of the available resources, supplementing those provided by the Local Education Authority. This spending is closely monitored to make sure it is used effectively for the designated purposes. For the past two years, the school has carefully tracked the income and expenditure related to the sixth form. This shows that the sixth form is viable, and that the situation is improving with the rise in numbers of students.
113. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. There are procedures in place to ensure that competitive prices are obtained. When financial decisions are being taken, comparisons are made with practice in other local schools. However, more could be done to compare patterns of expenditure with nationally available data, and to link spending more closely to improvements in standards.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

114. Leadership and management are good. The sixth form is now well led and run: expectations of higher attainment are clear. A new director of post-16 has been in post for just over a year and has a brief of raising standards, especially the underachievement in the C/D A-level grade ranges. A good start has been made; procedures have been tightened, with a good indicator being the excellent attendance now recorded by the sixth formers. Director, assistant and tutors work well together and the use of data analysis to set precise targets are improving.
115. Development planning for the sixth form is subsumed into the broad, whole-school plan. Whilst this has the advantage of integrating the sixth form with the school, it is now, considering the strengths in leadership available, appropriate to draw up a simple sixth form development plan, so that targets may be shared with all staff concerned and progress evaluated more distinctly.
116. Leadership has recognised the value of broadening the curriculum so as to meet

more closely the needs of a broadening spectrum of attainment amongst students admitted to the growing sixth form. The provision of AVCE travel and tourism courses in collaboration with a local further education college is a good example of how the school is working hard and successfully to extend co-operation in the area. It is, for example, seeking to modify the school day again, as part of a whole school review of the curriculum, to improve prospects of extending collaborative initiatives.

117. Some good leadership and management in departments help the students to learn effectively. Rising achievement is a direct result of this.

Resources

118. Resources for the sixth form are satisfactory. Significant improvements in the provision and use of computers complement the extended library provision. As with the main school, it is in the use of ICT in lessons that the main weakness lies. At the same time, computer failings undermine standards in business studies.
119. Collaborative work with further education does extend the range of learning resources available to the students involved, although opportunities for field work are limited by current timetable arrangements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

120. In order to improve standards the governors and senior management should:

- (1) Improve all pupils' accuracy in writing by devising a whole-school policy for literacy improvement and overseeing rigorously the way it operates and its effectiveness.
- (2) Report regularly to governors on the progress made in extending the amounts of good quality rather than satisfactory teaching and learning. This should be done and then measured, for example,
 - by establishing teaching, learning and behaviour management as the central focus of improvement planning;
 - by the ways middle managers' evaluation of their subject's performance improves;
 - by increases in the confidence of some teachers to share learning activities with the pupils;
 - by the extension of simple, shared approaches to dealing with misbehaviour;
 - by agreed policies on the ways written work is corrected and establishing thorough monitoring procedures to check they are happening;
 - by making sure the pupils' learning is extended by a better use of ICT in each subject; and
 - by providing work specifically intended to extend the gifted and talented.
- (3) Arrange for the appointment of extra learning support assistants so as to help in the raising of standards not only of pupils with special educational needs, but of all others whose attainment is affected by immature classroom behaviour.
- (4) Improve the quality of management in geography and modern foreign languages to make sure that each subject monitors its own performance more rigorously and that each is equipped with up-to-date schemes of work and policies.

- (5) Improve communications/participation by:
- increasing the expectations on middle managers to contribute to whole-school policy development;
 - reducing the amounts of written, especially critical correspondence, both within and outside the school, using less formal means of dealing with non-major issues;
 - making sure parents are informed/ consulted on changes that affect them to help improve the parents' perceptions of the school.

Sixth form

- (1) Keep under consistent review the accommodation for an expanding sixth form.
- (2) Provide religious education for sixth formers in response to legal requirements.

In addition to the above key issues, the governors should in their action planning consider how they might set up a daily act of collective worship for all.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	139
	Sixth form	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		95

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	5	17	60	51	6	0	0
Percentage	4	12	43	37	4	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	9	27	7	1	0	0
Percentage	2	20	60	16	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number observed in either the main school or the sixth form is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for [enter Years [] – [] and/or the sixth form here] as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100 in both, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	858	145
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	57	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	187	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

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	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	92.2
National comparative data	91.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	72	68	140

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	59	60
	Girls	51	53	51
	Total	97	112	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (64)	80 (72)	79 (69)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (25)	56 (51)	42 (33)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	60	52
	Girls	52	52	45
	Total	97	112	97
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (70)	80 (75)	69 (58)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (33)	49 (52)	38 (30)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2000	86	66	152

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	40	81	82
	Girls	38	63	65
	Total	78	144	147

Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (57)	95 (91)	97 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45 (44.0)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations				Year	Boys	Girls	Total
				2000	23	35	58
Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent			
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
School	14.8	20.6	18.5 (17.9)	3.5	0	2.8 (2.9)	
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)	

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	998
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	77	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59.64
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	103

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	24.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	2,635,634
Total expenditure	2,597,271
Expenditure per pupil	2,716
Balance brought forward from previous year	-30,964
Balance carried forward to next year	7,399

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

44%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1025

Number of questionnaires returned

451

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	55	10	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	57	4	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	53	15	3	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	59	17	6	8
The teaching is good.	22	64	5	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	46	26	6	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	33	50	8	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	48	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	13	45	29	7	7
The school is well led and managed.	22	47	10	8	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	59	11	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	46	14	6	11

Other issues raised by parents

A number of extra, positive points included the celebration of enthusiastic, caring teaching staff: some new members were said to be inspirational teachers. Some parents also reported strong pastoral care on the part of individual teachers. Respondents saw clear improvements under the new headteacher who clearly knew what was required to improve the school. There was good liaison between Years 6 and 7.

Numerous more negative points included a decline in discipline in the past two years, claimed excess in staff turnover and low morale, indicating leadership's incomplete task in getting the school to pull uniformly together. A number stated there to be a lack of consultation with parents over changes to the school day, uniform and no answers to correspondence. Other parents commented upon the poor attitudes of geography teaching staff and some weak teaching in modern foreign languages and mathematics. Some parents said that there was an annoying failure on the part of some teachers to attend meetings with them.

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Currently, teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils are well motivated.

Areas for improvement

- Results in English at GCSE are not high enough.
- There are too many pupils in some classes.
- The absence of a whole-school policy for improving literacy places the responsibility too heavily in the English department.

121. In national tests in 2000, pupils aged 14 obtained results that were above the national average but below the average for similar schools. Results for 2001 show a good improvement. Girls attain more highly than boys. The rate of improvement in recent years has been above the national trend. GCSE results in 2000 in English were below average and in 2001 matched the national average for the previous year. The 2000 English results were lower than those attained in mathematics and science and more than half the pupils failed to gain the grades expected on the evidence of earlier assessments of their abilities. Results in English literature are above average even though the school enters a much higher proportion of pupils than is the case nationally. Girls attained more highly than boys. Results in drama match national standards.
122. Evidence of the inspection confirms that attainment is above average at the end of Year 9. Pupils are confident in speech and contribute well to discussion, particularly when working within groups. They listen attentively to teachers and supportively to each other. If unsure, they ask for further explanation. These skills and their willingness to learn help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. Pupils read aloud accurately and at all levels of attainment with sufficient understanding to gain at least the main sense. Higher attainers become able to recognise significant details and to understand implication and shades of meaning. Lower attainers are more dependent upon guidance by teachers. Almost all pupils take pride in written work and present it neatly. Writing shows good awareness of formal and informal writing styles and higher attaining pupils, especially, can write appropriately for a variety of purposes. Most pupils are able to use adjectives and adverbs to enrich their work and many draw upon wide vocabularies. Ambitious use of a variety of sentence patterns is found frequently in the work of higher attainers. The quality of writing, including that of some pupils with otherwise good skills, is reduced by the frequency of errors of elementary sentence construction, misuse of the full stop and apostrophe and frequent misspelling of words in common use. Spelling of technical terms learned in lessons is usually accurate. Although there are few opportunities for pupils to use computers in class, the work of most includes evidence of confident use of word-processing and desktop publishing skills.
123. Standards of attainment are average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are confident in speech and are well able to present ideas and opinions to classmates, especially when working within groups. Because they listen carefully to teachers and each other, they understand what tasks require of them and commence work with confidence.

When teachers explain how their work will be assessed against examination standards, pupils show interest and become able to recognise for themselves how they might improve their work. This contributes to raising standards. Reading skills develop well at this stage and pupils are competent in making useful notes and in annotating texts so that they record significant features of what they read. Writing skills of pupils at all levels of attainment improve. Most are able to organise lengthy pieces of work in logical sequence and to write relevantly in answer to questions. Those pupils who entered the school with poor skills and low levels of confidence improve so that they gain successes in public examinations. Out-of-school catch-up sessions contribute to this progress. In most respects pupils now achieve satisfactorily by comparison with earlier attainment. The frequency of elementary errors of spelling and sentence formation, however, continues to mar the writing of most pupils and this feature contributes significantly to the underachievement of many pupils at GCSE. There is a need to monitor more systematically the progress that pupils make towards the targets set for them. Pupils are generally capable in the use of computers both for purposes of presentation and to research topics being studied.

124. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Almost always they meet their teachers' high expectations of their effort, behaviour and achievement and this helps them to make good progress in lessons. An example of strong motivation was observed in a Year 10 class studying 'Lord of the Flies'. Pupils showed excellent attitudes and worked with full concentration towards clearly understood targets. When given opportunities to work within groups, pupils demonstrate good skills of collaboration in discussions. They recognise that teachers and other pupils value their contributions. This increases their confidence and willingness to explore ideas for example when analysing the techniques of successful television quiz programmes in Year 11. Pupils in classes of sometimes well over thirty in Year 8 and above receive insufficient individual attention. This slows progress particularly of lower attainers for whom too little help is available from learning support assistants. In one very large Year 8 class, the restlessness and poor concentration of ten pupils reduced the effectiveness of teaching and the learning of their classmates.
125. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It was good in half the lessons seen and, in equal proportions, either very good or satisfactory in the remainder. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and know how pupils' work is assessed in examinations. In a number of lessons, teachers used descriptions of characteristics of different qualities of work so that pupils could see how they were attaining against national standards and what they needed to do to improve their skills. Teachers link lessons to previous and future work so that pupils understand their relevance. At the end, they comment on the progress made and this helps to reinforce understanding of the main learning points of the lesson. They provide opportunities for pupils to practise each of the skills of the subject and a variety of tasks, which help pupils to maintain good levels of interest and concentration. In very good lessons, teachers make skilful use of questions to ensure that pupils understand and also to encourage them to think more widely or more deeply. Almost always they expect pupils to explain their opinions or to provide evidence for their judgements. Weaker teaching is characterised by explanations of tasks that are not sufficiently clear, too slow a pace in lessons, particularly towards the end and transitions between different phases of lessons that fail to provide continuity so that concentration falters. Homework usually relates well to work being done in class. Marking of pupils' work is often detailed, concluding with a summary of strengths and offering guidance for improvement. It is not consistently of this high quality. Teachers know which pupils have special educational needs and aim to support them fully. However, their efforts are limited by lack of in-class support and sometimes by insufficient knowledge of targets set for pupils in their individual education plans.

126. The head of department has established a good departmental ethos. He is respected as a supportive leader. Within the department, however, there is a need for more precise allocation of departmental responsibilities such as the monitoring and development of teaching and learning and suitable systems for monitoring the progress of individual pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, towards the achievement of targets set for them. Management is, at present, unsatisfactory, as a result of the absence of such defined responsibilities. Since the previous report, satisfactory progress has been made. The quality of teaching in Years 7-9 has improved and matches that provided for older pupils. Pupils are now responding to opportunities to become more independent in their learning. Insufficient use continues to be made of assessment information and the need for a whole school contribution to the improvement of writing skills has not been met.
127. Standards of literacy are average. Pupils achieve less well at GCSE in subjects where levels of literacy are particularly significant. The school does not have an agreed policy for raising standards through the work of all subjects of the curriculum nor does it have a consistently used error correction strategy. Errors of sentence construction, basic punctuation and misspelling of words in common use reduce the effectiveness of the writing of most pupils including some with otherwise well-developed skills. Most subjects ensure that pupils understand and use words relevant to their studies and spell them correctly. These key words are often displayed in classrooms. Below Year 10, pupils have regular opportunities to write at length and receive guidance on how to organise their material only in English, history and mathematics. They are encouraged to read aloud fluently, demonstrating good understanding and with opportunities to hear teachers reading only in English, modern foreign languages and religious education. In the sixth form, students are expected to participate in discussion to develop knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Below the sixth form, there is evidence of pupils being given similar opportunities in some subjects and demonstrating growing confidence and fluency as they move through the school. Only in English are such opportunities provided for pupils from the full range of age and attainment.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in Years 7 to 11.
- Pupils' achievement is good.
- There is mostly good teaching, based on secure subject knowledge.
- Nearly all pupils' have positive attitudes to mathematics.
- Pupils are very good at explaining the methods they use to solve problems.
- There are good relationships between pupils, and between teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- There should be more planned use of ICT.
- The poor behaviour and attitudes of a few lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is adversely affecting their progress.
- The quality of satisfactory teaching should be improved to that of the good or very good teaching in the department.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above national expectations. External assessment results at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 reflect these standards. As a result of good, specialist teaching, which has an emphasis on getting pupils to understand and enjoy mathematics and to talk about their work, pupils make good

progress in lessons. This progress is also owing to pupils' good behaviour, participation in discussions about mathematics and hard work. Pupils' achievement overall, in relation to their above average standards when they came in Year 7, is good throughout the school. A few lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, do not make as much progress as they should.

129. At the end of Year 9, standards are well above national expectations. The National Curriculum Key Stage 3 test results in 2000 are well above national averages, and above those of similar schools. The 2001 results continue the trend of improvement; in 2001 this was evident in the higher grades of level 7+.
130. The 2000 GCSE results are significantly above national averages in the proportion of pupils gaining an A* to C grade. Comparison of the 2000 GCSE results to those of schools with similar prior attainment at Key Stage 3 (i.e. similar 1998 Key Stage 3 test results) shows that results were above average. Results in 2001 are similar to those in 2000. Nearly all pupils are entered for GCSE examinations, and nearly all pass. (In 2000 all pupils entered achieved a pass grade).
131. There is no clear difference when comparing the attainment of boys and girls in external assessments, or in class. For example in 2000, a higher proportion of boys than girls gained A* to C grades; in 2001 the situation was reversed. In general, standards and achievement are similar for both.
132. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and achieve as well as others. This is because they are placed in small classes and have an appropriate curriculum. For example, the Year 7 numeracy support group, and Year 10 and 11 graduated assessment course, mean that learning support assistants play a key role in this, both in class management and in helping and encouraging individuals when they find work difficult. This attention prevents most pupils from becoming discouraged, and they try harder as a result. However, there is a small group of pupils in Years 10 and 11, mainly those with educational and behavioural difficulties, who are not making as much progress as they should in lessons because of unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes. In two lessons seen, this small group came not prepared to work. Although teachers are usually able to stop their behaviour disrupting the work of the rest of the class, they have to work harder than they should need to. More support is needed in helping teachers deal effectively with issues like this.
133. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is good. They increase their knowledge and skills across all aspects of mathematics. Their improvement in oral skills helps their progress, as they are learning why they use certain methods, not just how to apply them. Pupils become skilled at explaining what methods they are using and why. Their numeracy skills are very good.
134. Higher attaining pupils quickly acquire a very good foundation in algebraic skills, and this helps them to reach high standards in their written work and is also good preparation for those planning to study A-level mathematics. Average attaining pupils have a wide repertoire of techniques, which they can use in standard situations. For example, pupils in Year 11 were able to use the formula connecting distance, speed and time to answer a series of questions. Lower attaining pupils continually practise their basic skills, for example in a Year 10 class using their knowledge of multiplication tables to identify prime numbers. They are able to apply these to simple problems, but have difficulties when they are described in words rather than numbers.
135. Homework is used effectively to help pupils consolidate and reinforce their learning in class, and contributes to their good progress. The regular completion of this is

another example of most pupils' positive attitudes to mathematics.

136. The quality of teaching is good. It is very good in one in seven lessons, good in over half of the lessons, and satisfactory in the rest. It is better in Years 7, 8 and 9, than in 10 and 11, due to the problems with a few lower-attaining pupils. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.
137. A strong feature of teaching is the ability to present mathematical ideas and methods in a way that is appropriate for different groups of pupils. Work is carefully targeted to pupils' level of understanding. For example, in a Year 7 lesson with lower attaining pupils, carefully drawn diagrams of thermometers were used to help them answer questions on temperature. In a high attaining class in Year 7, pupils were expected to be able to define, and understand, the difference between a formula and an algebraic expression. In all classes, there is a strong emphasis on using the correct technical vocabulary. Key words for a particular lesson are written on the whiteboard. Teachers refer to them frequently and pupils learn to use them correctly. Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics helps them choose examples that illustrate difficult concepts. They can understand the difficulties pupils experience and help them to find ways of overcoming them, so improving their rate of learning.
138. Very good teaching places a strong emphasis on getting pupils to link different parts of mathematics and to transfer skills to a new situation. Satisfactory, rather than good or better teaching, is characterised by the necessity to spend too much time with a small group of difficult pupils; this slows the progress of other pupils, as they are not receiving sufficient attention for part of the lesson.
139. Pupils' work is marked regularly, usually with good written feedback. Pupils understand how the marking system works, and know how well they are doing. This written feedback, combined with discussion in class on how to tackle difficult questions, helps pupils to achieve well. The department has good records, tracking progress through internal and external assessments. (It is difficult to compile and update these records, as there is no mathematics office.) Pupil data is used, along with 'value added' analysis, to monitor the progress of individuals and of year groups. This information is used effectively to form sets for teaching, and also to adapt the curriculum, for example the choice of appropriate GCSE courses.
140. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements. Departmental documentation shows how mathematics can be linked to spiritual and cultural events and displays in classrooms demonstrate this, for example one of mathematics and art, based on work from the Tate Gallery. The mathematics staff are appropriately qualified and work together effectively as a team, well led by the head of department. The joint planning for the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Year 7 is one indication of the effectiveness of their teamwork. ICT is used satisfactorily to help pupils make progress in mathematics, for example spreadsheets in the analysis and presentation of data collected in investigations. However, the department has recognised that there should be more opportunities to use ICT and this is a priority in the departmental development plan.
141. Good progress has been made in tackling the issues raised at the previous inspection: as a result, teaching has improved; standards have risen; pupils are much better at using and applying their mathematics.

Numeracy

142. Standards in numeracy are well above average. Pupils gain a secure grounding in mathematics lessons and are able to apply their skills and knowledge to tasks in other

subjects. There is no planned whole school approach to developing pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects, but as these skills are generally strong, it has not affected progress. For example, Year 9 pupils in history carrying out a research exercise on 19th Century living conditions were able to interpret and evaluate statistical information on deaths from cholera and other illnesses. There is a very good emphasis on numeracy in the AVCE travel and tourism course. If students followed the advice given on the presentation of graphs etc, it would lead to improved standards. Pupils and students are able to apply concepts well in design and technology. They can measure accurately, weigh ingredients in food technology and produce drawings and plans to scale. In geography, there is a good standard of annotated maps of diagrams and they can handle basic number work well. However, they are not taught simple correlation techniques. Pupils' and students' numeracy skills help their progress in science. They can calculate percentages in Years 7 to 9, calculate ratios in Years 10 and 11 and transpose formulae in Years 12 and 13.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed teachers raise standards.
- Good, stimulating activities make learning interesting.
- Good quality resources and technical support help learning.

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of marking and checking progress is unsatisfactory.
- The opportunities for pupils to actively use previously taught skills and ideas are not good enough.
- Pupils are not active enough in planning investigations, data logging, communicating their own findings and sharing ideas with teachers about what to do next to improve achievement.

143. In 2000, national test results obtained by 14 year-olds were well above average, whilst GCSE results obtained by 16 year-olds were above average nationally and average when compared with schools with a similar intake. GCE A-level results were broadly average. A-level chemistry results were above whilst biology and physics were below average.
144. Since the previous inspection the performance of 14 year-olds has improved faster than most schools. The trend for 16 year-olds has been slightly downwards. GCE A-level results have been improving for both boys and girls in chemistry and for boys in physics whilst girls' biology results have been maintained at average levels. In 2001, the results are likely to be above average for 14 year-olds, to be average for 16 year-olds and above average in the sixth form with both physics and biology improving.
145. Standards of attainment at the time of this inspection are average throughout the main school and above average in the sixth form. Attainment overall for 14 year-olds is not as high as the test results because below average attainment in science investigations reduces achievement. Pupils' lack of confidence in this important aspect of science has an accumulative effect because they learn the concepts well and then lose them because they are not used. They have come to rely too heavily in many lessons on the good, often very good, subject knowledge of their teachers. The pupils most affected by the lack of opportunity to consistently apply their minds to problem solving and investigative activity, are most likely usually in the middle range of ability. The effect is less pronounced in Years 10 and 11, but here too, the investigative work needs to be improved. By the time students reach the sixth form

courses they are fully stretched and practical work is better.

146. Pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory. Younger pupils have sound knowledge of science ideas but they do not plan investigations well. This is because the teachers too frequently tell them what to do and how to do it. Pupils do work more independently in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form so that achievement is satisfactory. However, whilst the pupils' response is mostly good, because all receive fair treatment, some teachers are more tolerant than others when faced with occasional inappropriate responses. Achievement is also reduced by inconsistent and, at times, inaccurate marking, and the use of vague targets, which cannot be checked or are not checked. Pupils are not sufficiently required to write their own planned procedures. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to understand the importance of the use of good data in improving knowledge. Many opportunities are missed because teachers fail to not heed pupils' comments or notes.
147. The teaching overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, good in Years 10 and 11 and good, with many very good features, in the sixth form. Very well taught lessons produced very good learning. In such lessons, the teachers first motivated their pupils well and then prepared them for a challenge and finally assessed how well they had done. These characteristics were strong when Year 9 pupils were investigating reaction rates, sorting chemicals into groups in Year 10 and finding out about atomic, ionic and molecular structures in Year 12. All lessons had good features, but the best example, to illustrate pupils' progress in using and applying their ideas, involved the pupils actively in designing and testing model 'Thermos' flasks. A chemistry lesson for Year 12 students was very good because they were enabled to do a worthwhile experiment on chemical structures and properties. They could do this because the teacher explained things clearly, gave very good support as well as checking their progress carefully as they worked. The work they were doing, though appropriate, was relatively easy compared with national expectations. They progressed very well and were making up ground quite fast. The biology lesson with Year 13 was good because good initial questioning motivated the students. They used good texts effectively, but their work was impeded because they were not sufficiently aware of how it was to be assessed.
148. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The science co-ordinator was appointed two years ago and new staff, new job descriptions and new courses are not fully established. Attainment has improved. There are better links with other schools, both primary and secondary. However, the school has not kept fully abreast with developments in the requirements for investigative work and the application of science in industry course requirements. As a result, achievement is undermined and is no more than satisfactory. The planning of lessons is often good and includes regular assessments of how well the pupils are learning. The courses are well planned, with good activities in an appropriate sequence but objectives for lessons are not well explained. Nationally agreed criteria for marking are not well used and pupils make too few decisions about what to do and how well they think they are doing.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Improving standards amongst 14 and 16 year-olds have occurred since the previous inspection.
- Improvements in management and planning are currently affecting standards positively.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching sometimes does not challenge the pupils strongly enough for learning to be good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils work in Years 7 to 11 need improvement.
- All pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not use ICT enough during their course.
- The space in which pupils work is too restricted.

149. At the time of the previous inspection the report stated that in Years 7 to 9 both pupils and teachers were unsure of what was required of them. Since that time there have been significant changes in this department, providing better guidance to teachers and pupils with the result that standards are rising. Teachers assess their pupils at the end of Year 9 to be below average. When looking at the work now being done at this key stage, though still a little below average, standards are improving. For example in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were drawing from bottles, they observed and responded to the shape of distorted reflection and the subtle colour changes they saw, and the drawings they made showed a more concerted effort to observe accurately and to record what they saw. Similarly in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were making prints based on an Aboriginal theme the craft skills associated with printmaking were good. However, wider learning about the way other cultures look at the world is below average.
150. In 2000, the numbers obtaining higher grades, A*-C, at GCSE were well below average. In 2001, though no national comparisons can yet be made, results improved significantly, with two thirds of pupils obtaining the grades A*-C with girls doing a lot better than boys. When looking at the work of pupils currently in Year 11, this picture of improvement, at least in the short term, has not been maintained. Work in lessons is all too similar, and all based on secondary sources, for example, pupils copy digital photographs and enlarge them. The reason why this approach has been adopted is because of the poor levels of motivation shown by these pupils in Year 10 and the poor experience within the art curriculum during Key Stage 3. When this is compared with what these pupils should be doing by this stage this approach to GCSE is unsatisfactory and the standard attained well below average. In contrast to this the work seen in Year 10 is significantly better. Pupils show much better levels of motivation the work is much nearer average standards and the approach to learning is well matched to the requirements of the syllabus. For example, in the first major project they have done, Year 10 pupils have researched ideas through drawing, and use these drawings as a basis for future work.
151. In the recent past the progress made by pupils of all abilities over time has been well below average, with the least and most able underachieving. In the work seen, the pattern of underachievement has been to a large extent arrested, and whilst standards in many cases are low, achievement is improving.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In lessons, quality varied, with some teaching being very good and none less than satisfactory. Where teaching is very good, for example in a Year 10 still life painting lesson, the teacher gave a clear introduction enhanced by a demonstration showing how to approach the task of painting directly from observation. There was an appropriate emphasis on the use of washes of colour and during this process pupils were encouraged to ask and answer questions and make their own suggestions of how best to proceed. The effect of this was to help pupils focus on how best to begin their paintings, with the result that learning was very good and standards were raised. Weaker teaching failed to make basic classroom routines support learning. For example, the task of getting work out and clearing away was poorly organised with the effect that the amount of time devoted to learning was reduced unduly. In addition to this, in some Year 10 and 11 lessons, the balance between the use of primary and secondary sources for starting work is not yet right which, though leading to superficially good work, is less

challenging than it should be, particularly for the highest attainers.

153. The overall attitude shown by pupils to their learning is good. The recent changes within the department have had a direct impact on the attitudes of pupils. More structured teaching and higher expectations have fostered an increase in the motivation and interest of the majority.
154. At the time of the previous inspection the management of the department lacked direction. This is no longer the case. Management is now satisfactory and clear priorities have been identified and some of them acted upon. For example there are now schemes of work in place for all key stages and all staff are working to these. There is still much to be done, in particular there is a need to concentrate on raising the quality of teaching and learning to that of the best, and to develop and implement an assessment process related to the National Curriculum levels and the GCSE criteria. There are also further aspects identified as weaknesses at the time of the previous inspection, which are still so now. For example, the balance between two and three-dimensional work is not yet right, and though pupils use the Internet to research the work of artists there are no formal opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to use computers as a tool for making art. Accommodation was identified as a weakness last time and this is still the case. Two of the three rooms are too small to accommodate larger lower school teaching groups, which limits the work pupils can do and affects standards.
155. These weaknesses mean that overall provision is unsatisfactory. However significant changes have taken place in a short time, which are having, and should continue to have, an impact on the standards reached by pupils. All the indications are that this department should improve.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Consistently high expectations across all areas of the design and technology curriculum raise standards.
- Good teaching helps the pupils to learn well.
- GCSE results are consistently above average.

Areas for improvement

- AS and A-level results have not improved as much as those at GCSE.
- The impact of ICT is not strong enough.

156. At the end of Year 9 in 2000, teachers assessed their pupils' work as in line with national averages. GCSE results in 2000 were well above national averages. Girls do better than boys, but between boys and girls in the school the gap is less than that seen nationally. The number of students entered for some design and technology subjects at A-level is very small. In 2001, for example, six students entered the design and technology examination with three students gaining grade B and the rest D and E grades. Food technology entered two students, both gaining grade A. These numbers are too small to draw any meaningful national comparisons, however when an average of points gained by each A-level grade is taken over time, attainment is close to the national average. The same is true for the AS level results; however, these were below expectation and they are currently under review.
157. In Years 7 to 9, the work seen in student files and in lessons is above average, and for the most able well above average. This is true of both designing and making. From early in the course pupils grasp the concept of the design process and how it may be applied. This was seen for example in a Year 8 lesson where pupils designed and made a compact disc storage system. Pupils confidently researched the product, made and evaluated possible designs and interpreted their ideas into well made finished products. Less able pupils frequently find the demands of the designing part of the course difficult but show good levels of achievement when using tools to make things.
158. Thorough detailed planning and designing are strong features of the work of pupils in Years 10 and 11. Evidence in lessons and in files shows that the difference in attainment between boys and girls is more marked in this aspect of the course. Girls are more thorough, producing much more detailed investigation and evaluation of products. Boys, though presenting their work well with quality graphics exploring mechanisms and possible construction methods, seen for example in the resistant materials course, fail to produce the in-depth research and investigation which is able to lift their attainment. This is particularly true of middle and lower attainers who find the demands of this aspect of the course difficult to meet. The work of older students in the sixth form is characterised by thorough research, good designing and product development, complemented by good skills in manufacture and evaluation. All the students currently following A-level design and technology courses show the potential to succeed.
159. Teaching and learning are consistently good at both key stages and in the sixth form. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their specialism. For example in a food lesson, the crisp introduction quickly set the scene for GCSE students to evaluate their current position and helped them to make decisions about what they were to tackle next. This ensured a good balance between teacher direction and pupils taking independent decisions about how their work was to proceed. The effect

was to encourage the involvement and independence of pupils and the striving for higher standards. Good planning and the thoughtful matching of work and resource to needs of pupils is a consistently good feature of teaching. For example, in a lesson where pupils learned how to use computer aided design, the work and the resources were well matched to the intellectual level of pupils. The pace of the lesson was brisk, good questioning probed their understanding and ICT was well used to support learning, with the result that learning and progress are very good. Lower-attaining pupils also benefit from the effective use of ICT. In a lesson where pupils learnt about the harmful effects of bacteria on food, pupils logged on to a website about food hygiene, the teacher made effective use of the on-line information providing short-term learning targets which ensured good progress. Teachers' understanding of the requirements of the A and AS level courses is good, and is effectively translated into appropriate activities, which are well matched to student need. Techniques of manufacture are well taught and it is a common expectation in all areas that products will be made to a high standard. This can be seen for example in the product design textiles lessons where the careful manufacture of garments and attention to detail and finish is evident.

160. The attitude of pupils and students to their learning is always good and sometimes very good. Pupils and students are all eager to learn and be involved in technology activities. More able pupils in particular show good levels of independent learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, especially, find the demand of the technology course challenging, but work very hard to meet the deadlines for the course, much of it in their own time. Sixth form students have a very mature attitude to work showing good levels of motivation.
161. The management of the department is good. The head of department provides clear direction and leadership, and the work of the department is effectively monitored ensuring that common standards and expectations are a feature of all areas of the technology curriculum. The procedures for assessing the work of all pupils are very good and provide valuable information on how well pupils and students are doing, and to the department about how well they plan and teach the subject. The process of moderation, which comes at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, is an effective way of ensuring common standards across the department, and of reviewing the quality and range of projects, and how closely they meet the needs of pupils. The National Curriculum is fully covered, GCSE courses provide a good range of choice, and the AS and A-level courses aim to be responsive to student choice. A particular strength of the department is the use made of ICT by all areas of the technology curriculum. Teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 are arranged according to pupils' ability in mathematics and science, this allows teachers to target lessons more closely to the needs of pupils. Teachers work hard to meet the needs of the different abilities in GCSE groups, but the absence of any support for the least able means that the folder work of these pupils is often not as good as it should be.
162. Since the previous inspection standards in Year 9 and Year 11 have improved and those at A-level have been maintained. This is a good department where teachers work well together and have a shared vision on how to build on its current success.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils have a better understanding of geographical patterns and processes than at the time of the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the department remain unsatisfactory.
- Documentation is out of date and incomplete.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve well enough.
- Shared teaching of a number of classes continues to affect pupils' progress adversely.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to improve their computer skills.
- Development planning dwells too much on comparatively minor matters with insufficient attention paid to teaching and learning.

163. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with age-related expectations in all year groups. This represents unsatisfactory progress for 14 year-old pupils, who entered the school with above average standards. Achievements in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory in relation to their standards at the start of Year 10. Similarly, the achievement of sixth form students is satisfactory in relation to their standards at the start of Year 12. Attributable in part to an improvement in the quality of teaching, there has been a satisfactory improvement in standards in Years 10 to 12 since the previous inspection.
164. National Curriculum teacher assessments in 2000 were well below the national average for both boys and girls. There was a marked improvement in 2001. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years but are better than at the previous inspection. They were above the national average in 1999 and have since declined to a level broadly in line with the national average. Relative GCSE performance figures show geography to be one of the weaker subjects in the school. There is no consistent pattern of either boys' or girls' superiority in recent years.
165. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils attain in line with national expectations, with small minorities above and below. All pupils have satisfactory map reading skills. Higher attaining pupils compile good annotated maps and diagrams and make clear notes when extracting relevant information from a range of sources. Lower attainers however, have difficulty with any requirement to write at length. They are able to describe, but not explain geographical processes, as seen in a lesson on volcanic activity. By age 16, attainment for most pupils remains in line with national expectations. Higher attaining pupils make accurate notes and have for example, a good grasp of geographical models such as those of urban structure, and use these models during coursework based on local studies. Their coursework is good. In it they employ hypothesis testing and analysis of their gathered data, often using computers to enhance the quality of text and graphs. They are not taught how to correlate different sets of data, so their analyses are limited to straightforward comparisons using elementary graphical methods. Lower attainers, as in Years 7 to 9 are hampered by weak writing skills, and in their coursework present their data neatly but carry out no meaningful analysis. There are no significant gender differences in standards of work seen during the inspection. Sixth form work was not examined in depth, merely sampled; standards are satisfactory.
166. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. One third is good, and none is unsatisfactory. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching by specialists is

on average, better than that of non-specialists, and is, on average, best in the sixth form. The best teaching is characterised by enthusiasm for the subject, sensible time allocation to different activities and good classroom management and control. These qualities were seen in a Year 10 lesson when pupils were given very good guidance on how to record primary and secondary data gathered by the pupils during fieldwork. Pupils' response to good teaching is positive. They work collaboratively in small groups and behave well. They are assisted in concentrating on their tasks by the calm atmosphere in the classroom and clear guidance from the teachers in the use of learning resources. Good inclusive questioning ensures that all pupils become actively involved. Most lessons begin with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, enabling them to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. In comparatively less successful lessons there is insufficient matching of tasks to the capabilities of individual pupils and poor time management with too much time spent on exposition and not enough for pupils to complete tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at a similar rate to the remainder. Teachers know them well, but learning support assistants were not seen in any lessons. Homework is set regularly and provides valuable reinforcement to classroom learning. The quality of marking is unsatisfactory. Much work is left unmarked, the style of marking of different teachers is variable, and it is only rarely accompanied by helpful comments.

167. Modest improvements since the previous inspection are largely the result of better teaching. Leadership and management of the department have not improved and remain unsatisfactory. Marking by different teachers is inconsistent and is not monitored, presenting pupils and parents with a confused picture of pupils' progress. Documentation is sparse, the department handbook and schemes of work are out of date. Development plans, while detailed, have insufficient emphasis on ways of improving teaching and learning. While split teaching is unavoidable in some cases because of a poorly planned school timetable, one Year 8 class has three different teachers, and the rationale for having split teaching in Year 11 is difficult to justify. Split teaching is unhelpful for continuity and progression of learning. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to improve their computer skills, and if they are to make a successful transition from GCSE to AS and A-level courses they need to become familiar with more advanced numerical methods than used currently in Year 11 for data analysis. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils, albeit in an unplanned way.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching fosters very good learning in most lessons.
- The emphasis placed on developing literacy skills is helping to improve the standards achieved by many pupils.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The under-use of ICT means that opportunities to develop pupils' research skills are missed.
- The development of numeracy lacks consistency.
- The compilation of a departmental handbook should be given priority.
- The level of extra support for pupils with special educational needs is too low.

168. Based on National Curriculum teacher assessments, standards, at the end of Year 9, were below the national average in 2000. Girls are achieving higher standards than are boys. Though national comparative figures are not available for the year 2001, the achievement of both boys and girls improved significantly. The main reason why the standards of some pupils are below average is because they are not confident readers and they do not write fluently, or in sufficient detail. The emphasis placed on literacy development is, however, successfully addressing this impediment.
169. Overall GCSE results in 2000 for higher grades, A* to C, were above the national average. Girls achieved particularly well and their results were significantly above average and were significantly better than the results achieved by boys. The results for boys were below average. For grades A* to G, overall results were in line with national averages, though boys did better than girls. Indeed, the standards achieved by boys were above average; whereas the standards for girls were below average. Though no national comparative data are available for 2001, the overall proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C improved significantly. This was because of a notable improvement in the results for boys; though girls still did better than boys. Overall results for grades A* to G also showed an improvement, with boys, who recorded a 100 per cent pass rate, again doing better than girls. The results for both 2000 and 2001 clearly indicate that achievement is good. Pupils' results at the end of Year 11 are frequently above those predicted when they commence their GCSE course in Year 10.
170. For present pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 overall standards of work seen are in line with national average expectations, but the ability range is wide. Those pupils who cannot write fluently, or with confidence, in English, record standards that are below, and sometimes, well below average for their age. There are, however, a significant number of pupils whose work is at least in line with national average expectations, with a significant minority whose standard of work is well above this level. Most pupils in these three years achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course. Such good achievement owes much to the supportive and thoughtful teaching they receive. The standards of work of current GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 is similarly in line with national average expectations but, again, there is considerable variation. A significant minority of pupils is working above, or even well above, this level. A major factor contributing to such good achievement is the strong emphasis that is placed on developing literacy skills. Sensible and sensitive measures are used to improve pupils' vocabularies and the consistent emphasis that is placed on developing writing skills helps all pupils to improve the standard of their work.
171. The quality of teaching is good in all years and helps all pupils to learn. The previous inspection report commented on the good quality of teaching and the standard has been at least maintained, if not improved. Though one lesson was unsatisfactory, all other lessons seen were at least satisfactory and many were significantly better than this. In some cases teaching was inspirational and succeeded in motivating pupils to make clearly measurable improvements in their learning during the lesson. For example, in a bottom set Year 11 lesson, where many pupils had special educational needs, sensitive and very well planned teaching enabled all pupils to develop their understanding of the role of the 'Alphabet Agencies' during the New Deal era in the USA. The teaching was inclusive, with all pupils being challenged. Though many had limited literacy skills, the way the main task was thoughtfully planned enabled the pupils to identify the correct meaning of words such as 'quotas' and, by the end of the lesson, they could identify the main functions of agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority. The pupils achieved well in this lesson because of the quality of the teaching, but pressure was placed on the teacher, as no learning support was available even though most pupils were designated as having distinct special educational needs. Another highly effective lesson was seen with a Year 9 class. The

theme was the living conditions of the working classes in Victorian England. Excellent learning resulted because of the excellent teaching. The lesson was superbly planned and the pupils were challenged throughout the lesson. Expectations were high and the lesson was timed to perfection. As a result the pupils developed their skills of evaluation and deduction and their learning further benefited from the emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy. Mini plenary sessions held during the lesson gave ample opportunity for the pupils to show how much they had learnt. Occasionally, when teaching was less effective, the pace of lessons was slower and the challenges were fewer and less exacting. In such cases, pupils were less able to be analytical in their work and their answers became factual. For example in another Year 9 lesson on Victorian England, pupils identified cholera as a major cause of death, but they could not explain why some areas of London, or Leeds, suffered more than did others.

172. Since the previous inspection, a new head of department has been appointed and many tangible improvements can be highlighted. Results are improving and a good co-ordinated team has been established. Assessment techniques, which were criticised in the previous report, have improved and the department is successfully boosting the literacy skills of all pupils. This is helping to raise standards. More emphasis should, however, be placed on the use of numeracy and the role of ICT, especially in developing the pupils' research skills. Despite many improvements, some problems remain. Many lessons are taught in unsuitable rooms. Allied to this, the supply of textbooks is unsatisfactory. Both these factors serve to reduce standards. Teachers are placed under undue pressure because there is insufficient learning support for pupils with special educational needs and some awkward time-tabling arrangements, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, have resulted in split classes. These issues also impact adversely on standards. In all other respects the department is lively, innovative and improving, though a department handbook, summarising the work and objectives of the department, is needed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching means that, although attainment is below national expectations, students' achievement is high and they are beginning to pick up skills quickly.
- Management of the department is very good. Newly qualified teachers are supported well and the work of the department is monitored and organised efficiently.
- Procedures for assessing students' work are very thorough and are used to motivate individual students to improve their performance.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures to assess ICT skills in other subjects are lacking.
- The department will need to develop courses that are appropriate for students of all abilities in Years 10 and 11.
- The department will need to evaluate results against other subjects and national benchmarks.

173. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is below expectations and has been for the last two years. This is mostly because information technology was not offered to students in Years 8 to 11 prior to September 2001. It is also partly because, until that time, the school had only one fully equipped information technology room. Now that there are three such rooms and information technology is taught throughout Years 7 to 11, achievement is good, in some cases very good. Standards are above expectations in

half of the lessons observed, albeit within a narrow range of skills. This represents considerable progress in a relatively short time span. That pattern is repeated in Years 10 and 11. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is below the national expectation but again achievement is good. In half of the lessons observed, the quality of students' work was above average. Not all students have been exposed to the full range of the curriculum but a substantial number are acquiring the skills and a minority is doing so very quickly. There is, however, the anomaly of students in Year 8 doing work designing business cards using PowerPoint, that is similar to the work of students in Year 10. The latter generally do it better, possibly because they have more imagination, based on their greater experience of art and design.

174. Achievement is good because learning is good or better in most lessons. Pupils have good relationships, recognising their teachers' high level of subject knowledge and want to take advantage of it. They are motivated to succeed by a quality of teaching that is mostly good with over a third being very good or excellent. Because teachers have a high level of technical expertise they are not discomfited by the unexpected; a Year 8 lesson was continued very productively after being interrupted by a network failure. Because of this, they are very confident and can use the early part of each lesson to build on those good relationships and establish the right working atmosphere. They have high expectations, so the pupils work purposefully and often independently and sustain a high level of concentration on their lesson assignments. Consequently, students generally have a positive attitude to lessons. They behave well and work co-operatively. They apply themselves to their assignments and take responsibility for their learning. As a result of students spending the first ten minutes of each lesson working to improve their typing skills, most type using two hands and a minority can touch-type, although some students in Year 9 do not. Above average attainers in Year 8 are sufficiently competent that they correctly select the numeric keypad when doing the relevant typing exercises.
175. Because they make appropriate efforts they are successful and being aware of that success they want to do better. Teachers exploit this well by the specific support that they give to students of all abilities. In the course of a lesson in Year 7 and another in Year 11, a teacher spoke to every pupil in the class about the level of their work, using their assessment data as a basis. He set individual targets for each pupil and for those whom he judged to be of above average ability, he set extra work to stretch them and extend their learning. In that Year 11 lesson students used Microsoft Office applications very competently and were able to transfer data between them through Windows. They accessed the 'Web' readily and confidently to search for relevant information. From this they imported selected material into their files to illustrate the argument they were leading. In the Year 7 lesson students created a presentation in PowerPoint arguing for and against a proposal to establish a speed limit for power boats on Lake Windermere, in which they were encouraged to develop the social and moral issues arising out of that proposal.
176. Lessons are planned well in relation to the setting arrangements. Some of the activities, undertaken at a brisk pace, are work related; a Year 8 class are designing business cards for an imaginary company and learning the conventions used in formal and informal correspondence. Lesson planning effectively encompasses many strands from a variety of disciplines including literacy. Students in a Year 11 class researched via the 'Web' to find information on anti-vivisection. They had to analyse their findings objectively and make a presentation to explain vivisection and the social and moral arguments for and against it in language that would be suitable for eight year-old children. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
177. A few students have poor social skills and are prone to be disruptive. Teachers have to work hard to keep such students on task and mostly they succeed in this. Where

teaching was on occasion unsatisfactory, there was a lack of control and students underachieved.

178. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator leads a very supportive team that works well together. Teaching, which has improved since the previous inspection, is monitored in the department and newly qualified teachers appreciate the help they have received. Administrative material is printed to CD and upgraded regularly for colleagues to transfer to their lap top computers, which are used in the administration of their teaching. New equipment has been provided and information technology is now taught to all students. Their achievement is good and the curriculum now meets statutory requirements. A number of issues remain. There are good programmes of study and associated lesson plans but appropriate courses in Years 10 and 11 will need to be developed for students in the lower range of ability for whom, AS level work will be too demanding. If setting is to achieve its desired aim, lesson support staff will need to be trained in information technology skills and involved more fully in planning lesson content. There are very good, much improved assessment procedures but the department needs to use assessment data more fully in evaluating its performance in relation to other subjects and national benchmarks. The co-ordinator's leadership of the department is very good. He is unafraid to lead from the front and has clear ideas as to the future of information and communication technology.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum.

179. The use of ICT in the other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Until the three information technology rooms currently in use became available in September 2001, it was not possible for much further development to occur. Similarly, until the national training scheme started following an audit of staff skills, a majority of staff lacked the confidence to become involved. Some teachers have been trained and, since September, some have started to use the new facilities to integrate information technology into their study programmes. Pupils use spreadsheets and word processing to improve the presentation of their written work in English, geography, history and science. In a number of subjects, students use the Internet as an effective tool to improve learning. In science the use of ICT is limited but teachers do use it effectively in simulations and in solving problems that involve finding patterns within a large mass of data. In design and technology, sixth form students show a good level of learning in using Pro-Desktop as a helpful introduction to computer aided design. They use databases to analyse the results of questionnaires in food technology. In mathematics students use it to investigate graphs. Very little use is made in the teaching of art, history, modern foreign languages and music.
180. There are no procedures for assessing pupils' and students' ICT skills in other subject areas.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Results in GCSE German have been well above national averages for the past three years.
- Pupils' response to the teaching of modern languages is positive: they behave well, approach their studies with interest and work sensibly in pairs and in groups.
- The department has a wide range of texts in both French and German, which are used effectively to provide pupils with opportunities to read for pleasure; library stock is extensive and comprises books relevant to all year groups.
- Teachers give freely of their time after school to assist pupils who are having difficulty with coursework and homework.
- Display in the teaching area is of high quality and classrooms are adorned with pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE French are still too low and below national averages.
- Aspects of management are in need of urgent attention: there is no detailed handbook, schemes of work are not fully up to date and the monitoring of teaching is not yet an integral part of the work of the department.
- The use of ICT in teaching is underdeveloped
- There are very few pupils in Years 10 and 11 who study both French and German.

181. At the end of Year 9, standards in French are average overall but work in the top sets is generally above norms. Writing is the weakest area yet pupils listen intently and respond well to the spoken language. They are generally willing to speak French and geographical presentations in Year 8 are a strong feature. Pupils with higher capabilities can use the present, perfect and future tenses accurately but those who find much of the work difficult struggle to ask questions of each other and their pronunciation is weak. In German, standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 3. They respond well to the German spoken by their teachers but find it harder to understand native speakers who communicate at speed. Pupils enjoy using the language actively and those in Year 9 are adept at asking their classmates questions, for example about how they use their free time.

182. At the end of Year 11, attainment in GCSE French has been below national averages for the past three years and girls have outperformed boys over this period. However, results are improving and, in work seen during the inspection, standards in French are higher than examination results indicate. Pupils in the top sets are beginning to write more extensively and to use French to give their own opinions. In the lower sets, pupils' weaknesses are in understanding and using basic vocabulary. They make simple errors in their written work and lack confidence when speaking French. Although there was regression in 2001, attainment in GCSE German has been consistently better than the national average for the past three years and work seen during the inspection confirmed this positive picture. Most pupils have an extensive vocabulary and they use quite complex grammar accurately. However, reading skills are underdeveloped and pupils still find pronunciation difficult.

183. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It has improved substantially since the previous inspection and is characterised by the use of a variety of methods, which help pupils learn in their own individual ways. Teaching was satisfactory or better in over 90 per cent of lessons and very good teaching was seen in both key stages. Relations between teachers and pupils are strong and they serve to ensure that pupils are not

frightened to make mistakes and are, therefore, willing to speak both languages. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils effectively and have high expectations of what they can do. In a very good Year 8 French lesson, for example, the teacher's sensitive yet rigorous approach ensured that pupils, who often find the subject matter difficult, were desperate to answer questions, asking for more work! These pupils made very good progress, from a low baseline, in matching pictures with descriptions and in increasing their own vocabulary.

184. Teachers emphasise the accurate use of grammar in both French and German and this leads to pupils in top sets making good progress in the understanding of more complex constructions and in becoming increasingly confident in the use of three tenses. Extensive use of the foreign language by teachers is effective in helping pupils to increase their own fluency and, in a Year 10 German lesson, pupils surprised themselves at how well they could build up a picture of the key features of their own town after a 30-minute session in which virtually no English was spoken. Moreover, in a very good Year 11 French lesson, the teacher spoke the foreign language for the full hour and pupils were so used to this that they were able to complete quite difficult assignments on positive and negative aspects of life in cities; furthermore they could understand and make comments on a 'rap' poem which dealt with life as full of leisure! In the lessons, which were not as good, teachers did not sustain the use of the foreign language and there was little opportunity to review progress. In these lessons, challenge was not a key feature, pace was lacking and teachers could have expected pupils to complete more work. A failure to match the work to the pupils' attainment, so that they were unable to get what was intended out of the lessons was also a feature of unsatisfactory teaching.
185. Pupils respond well to modern languages, behave well and speak highly of their teachers. Pupils know that the teachers care for them and they enjoy the many opportunities to work in groups, when they can learn from each other. Teachers are concerned to mark work regularly and to give comments on how pupils may improve their standards even further. Pupils are, therefore, generally well aware of the levels at which they working and they know what they must do in order to make progress. In addition, teachers wish to ensure that everyone, irrespective of capability, is included in what is on offer; the good progress made by boys in Year 10 French is a testament to the effectiveness of these efforts.
186. The department is a cohesive team, staffed by industrious and committed teachers, who have identified priorities for the future and who give of their time to organise study trips to France every year. However, there is no formal monitoring of teaching and members of the department, therefore, cannot always learn from the talents and successes of each other. The departmental development plan lacks detail, particularly in relation to the ongoing development of teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of all pupils. There is no departmental handbook and relevant policies have not yet been fully discussed. Library provision is very good and there are many tapes and videos within the area. What is now needed is a full audit in order to consider a strategy to replace out-of-date resources in both French and German and to avoid an over-reliance on worksheets.
187. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is better, pupils respond well in both key stages and progress among higher attaining pupils is now good overall. Management weaknesses undermine the department's otherwise good capacity for improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The range and quality of out-of-school activities are good.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment systems are not related to National Curriculum programmes of study and attainment levels.
- Schemes of work do not give a clear enough indication of how progress is to be made.
- ICT is not used effectively enough in the curriculum;
- There is too much concentration on technical exercises and not enough on making music.

188. In 2001, GCSE results at higher grades, A*-C, were lower than in the previous year. However, the trend since the previous inspection has been one of improvement with results in 2000 being well above the national average. Standards observed amongst 14 to 16 year-olds during the inspection were average overall, with standards in Year 10 above average.
189. Pupils enter the school achieving just below average standards in music. Teacher assessments in 2001 indicate that by the end of Year 9 most pupils are achieving standards at or above the national average. However, standards of work observed during the inspection were below average with the exception of those who have instrumental lessons, where they were at or above the national average. Progress through Years 7 to 9 is, for most pupils, erratic due to inconsistent teaching, a scheme of work that does not clearly provide for progression in musical learning and lack of effective assessment systems. Consequently, in some cases, standards are higher in Year 8 than in Year 9, where, for most pupils they are below the national average.
190. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is inconsistent with examples of good, satisfactory, but also some unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching by visiting instrumental teachers ranged from satisfactory to good.
191. Teaching is good when learning objectives are clear to pupils and the activities they are asked to do are recognisable to them as being musical. An example of this was a Year 8 lesson that began with an enjoyable vocal 'warm-up' where pupils imitated the sounds of a drum-kit. The pupils then went on to sing, and rehearse an accompaniment to, the Beatles' song *Eleanor Rigby*. Despite the difficulties of having to work in the school hall, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the pace of the lesson ensured that pupils' attitudes were very good throughout and standards achieved were at the level expected for this age.
192. The clear focus on musical activity that characterised this lesson is not a feature of all teaching in the department. Sometimes, lessons concentrate on technical exercises such as learning scales or memorising notation without reference to any immediate musical application. Such mechanistic activities are difficult for pupils to relate to any specific musical purpose or style. Consequently, pupils do not know what they are trying to achieve, resulting in some pupils, particularly boys, losing interest and making little progress. Moreover, the over-concentration on the mechanistic and technical aspects of music results in opportunities being lost to contribute to pupils' spiritual and aesthetic development.

193. Teachers make great efforts to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are involved in lessons and that their contributions are valued. The department's insistence on mutual respect between pupils means that pupils listen to each other's work attentively and, when given the opportunity, comment sensitively on what they feel are its strengths and weaknesses.
194. The department supports a wide range of out-of-school activities including two choirs, two jazz bands and an orchestra. These perform to a high standard and are greatly valued by pupils and parents. There are many concerts and arts events throughout the year, including an annual production mounted in conjunction with the drama department. All these activities make a positive contribution to pupils' cultural and social development. A junior choir practice, observed during the inspection week, demonstrated very good teaching and attainment. Diction was clear and the pupils sang securely in three-part harmony. At an open evening later in the week they performed with sensitivity and an awareness of the performance occasion.
195. Both members of music staff left the school at the end of the term prior to the inspection. At the time of the inspection, a newly qualified teacher and a part time teacher who has since been appointed as head of department staffed the department. Leadership and management have traditionally been strong in developing a range of out-of-school activities to a high standard. However, management has been less effective in developing the classroom music curriculum and effective assessment systems. Schemes of work make little explicit reference to progression or the ways in which ICT can enhance pupils' learning and there is little coherent monitoring of pupils' progress in music. The lack of assessment records has resulted in incoming staff having little information about what pupils have achieved in music. The school has not satisfactorily provided for the induction and support of the newly qualified teacher.
196. The improvement since the previous inspection is only just satisfactory. Issues raised in the previous inspection report concerning the inadequacy of the accommodation and the lack of assessment procedures have yet to be addressed. A scheme of work has been developed which introduces pupils to a wide range of music but does not yet clearly articulate the way in which the ordering of modules provides for progress in music learning. The resourcing of music technology has improved but is not integrated into the curriculum as a means of raising standards. The condition of classroom percussion instruments remains poor. However, the new head of department has a clear vision of the role of music in the education of all children and, particularly, the importance of maintaining an effective balance and relationship between curricular and out-of-school musical activities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There is good teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Pupils are interested in and have a positive attitude towards physical education.
- Results in GCSE physical education are consistently above average.
- Standards in rugby, hockey, netball, cricket, cross-country and athletics are high.

Areas for improvement

- The breadth and balance of curriculum in Key Stage 3 is limited.
- Pupils have no choice of activities in Key Stage 4.
- Schemes of work do not incorporate strands of the National Curriculum.

197. Teachers' assessments of 14 year-old pupils' attainment in 2001 indicate achievement in line with national expectations. GCSE results in 2001, with 86 per cent of pupils obtaining a higher grade, A*-C, show improvement on the above average results of the previous year, which were above national levels.
198. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, although in badminton some pupils are working below expected levels. In Year 7 soccer, pupils have basic passing skills, and are steadily growing in confidence in controlling the ball. Pupils in Year 8 basketball have good technique in shooting and in ball-handling skills such as passing and dribbling. In badminton in Year 9 pupils are able to play a range of strokes but lack power and are unable to hit good length shots. In rugby in this year there are some very high attaining pupils who have excellent passing and kicking skills and tactical awareness. The majority of pupils are confident in handling and running with the ball, have a good understanding of the game and play at a standard well above nationally-expected levels. In Year 10 netball, most pupils are working above the levels expected for their age, showing a good knowledge of rules and tactics as well as performance skills in passing, receiving and shooting. In rugby in Year 11, pupils are working above levels expected for their age, with rucking skills and effective tackling. In GCSE badminton in this year, pupils understand basic tactics and scoring but have poor quality services. In GCSE theory, pupils understand methods of training, skeletal and muscular systems. Higher attaining pupils have well organised files, clear notes and detailed diagrams, which help them revise effectively for unit tests and examinations.
199. In all lessons, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they learn new skills and improve and refine existing ones. In Year 7 hockey, pupils make good progress in learning how to run with the ball, pass and stop with the correct technique. The individual help given to a pupil with special educational needs in Year 8 badminton by a teaching assistant helped the pupil to make good progress. In Year 9 rugby pupils make significant progress over the unit of work, culminating in them being able to devise their own set plays and adapt them during a full game. In Year 11 rugby pupils learn the new skill of lifting in the line out, and are able to make use of this skill in a competitive game.
200. Teaching is good; some is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which helps them to give clear explanations and demonstrations to pupils, helping them learn new skills and improve existing ones. In all lessons, teachers make good use of question and answer sessions, which gives pupils the opportunity to evaluate their own and other's performances helping them learn. Pupils are given some control

of their own learning at the start of lessons by taking charge of their own warm up. In Year 9 rugby, pupils are given considerable opportunities for independence as they plan and evaluate their performances, as they practise line out and other set plays. Classes are always well managed and pupils behave well. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves are major factors in successful lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject, very few miss practical lessons, they work hard at tasks set all of which contribute to their learning.

201. The department is well led and managed. There is a commitment by the department, with some valuable help from other teachers, to provide out-of-school activities. This allows higher attaining and talented pupils to play at higher levels for school, district and county teams. There are strengths in team games, cross-country and athletics, and good developments in soccer with the introduction of both boys' and girls' teams this year.
202. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement. Standards have been maintained. Teaching is good and pupils continue to show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. GCSE has been successfully introduced with results above national levels in the last two years.
203. There is insufficient time for gymnastics and outdoor and adventurous activities for 11 to 14 year-olds to provide viable programmes of study in these activities. The indoor accommodation for the subject is the main hall of the Kendal Leisure Centre; this is suitable for games, but unsuitable for dance and gymnastics. The new onsite changing rooms are inadequate for larger groups, there is no base classroom for GCSE lessons, and the small tarmac area for netball is in poor condition, undermining standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**. Because none is taught, provision in the sixth form is poor.

Strengths

- GCSE results improved in 2001.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has recently improved.

Areas for improvement

- Making provision for religious education in the sixth form.
- Work in Years 10 and 11, which is not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils.
- There is not enough structured support in written work for pupils whose literacy skills are weak.

204. The GCSE examination results in 2000 were below average with only 37 per cent of candidates gaining grades A*-C. Results in 2001 were better. The proportion of A*-C grades increased to 52 per cent and the number of pupils reaching the higher grades rose from 26 to 49. Most pupils in Year 11 were entered for the examination, and compared with results in other subjects this represents satisfactory achievement.
205. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 matches the expectations set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus and exceeds them in some areas. Teachers pass on well to their pupils their good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Work seen during the

inspection shows that most pupils have a firm grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and of other world religions such as Judaism and Islam. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. This is because teachers are enthusiastic, lessons are well planned and interesting, and most pupils have positive attitudes. Most pupils remember accurately what they have learnt in the previous lesson. For example, pupils in a Year 8 class were keen to recount the story of Moses and the Burning Bush and could recall most of the details. Pupils also learn from religious belief as well as learning about it and they make thoughtful responses to questions about puzzling happenings such as near death experiences, which defy scientific analysis. Pupils contribute enthusiastically in discussions, using key religious words correctly. They record information carefully and neatly in their exercise books, with effective use of spider graphs and lively illustrations. However, a significant minority of lower attaining pupils struggle to complete their assignments successfully. Their written responses are too brief and presentation is often untidy.

206. Because of changes in staffing and examination syllabus, Year 11 pupils only began their GCSE short course at the beginning of this term. However, good teaching enables most pupils to reach average standards in discussions and independent work on religious responses to moral issues. The overall quality of coursework is satisfactory and some of it is of a high standard. Higher attaining pupils achieve well. They research their subjects in depth and write at length with clarity and assurance, making good use of ICT to present their work professionally. Pupils generally write at reasonable length and produce carefully prepared answers to questions.
207. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject. This is because of the good relationships within the classroom and the attractive accommodation. Teachers have worked hard to transform the classrooms into cheerful and stimulating learning areas with eye-catching displays of pupils' work, and key words and phrases for ready reference. However, although most pupils co-operate well in lessons, a minority finds difficulty in concentrating and requires a considerable amount of help. When teachers are without support in the classroom they have to work very hard to achieve their objectives, as was the case in a Year 10 lesson where there were a large number of pupils with special educational needs. Well-structured learning materials, such as lists of useful vocabulary, help pupils with literacy problems to improve the quality of their work. However, such materials are not used consistently within the department.
208. The quality of teaching is good and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In three-quarters of the lessons seen the teaching was good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The major strengths lie in a shared commitment to the improvement of the subject, the well-planned lessons and the good rapport which teachers have established with their pupils. Lessons proceed purposefully and pupils enjoy the work they are doing. Concise introductions, during which the aims of the lesson are clearly stated, ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. For example, pupils in a Year 9 class responded well to challenging tasks when watching a video on near death experiences. They were quite clear about what they had to do and made good quality notes, which they used effectively in discussions. Phrases such as 'the soul is raised out of the body' showed that they appreciated the spiritual significance of these experiences. Teachers use the closing moments of the lesson effectively to check on progress and consolidate the key learning points. Homework plays an important role in developing a personal response and independent research skills. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good it is because there is not enough challenge in the higher sets or enough structured support in writing tasks for lower attainers.
209. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Responsibilities are divided between the school's curriculum manager who teaches in the department and the specialist

teacher who is in charge of religious education. Both are new to the school and this arrangement has been effective in enabling major changes to be made efficiently in a short time. The capacity for improvement is very good, but needs single focused management. The three teachers work well together as a team and their enthusiasm and commitment is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject. The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has improved and marking and target setting are becoming a strength of the department. In order to continue to raise standards, teachers need to adapt their techniques to meet the needs of higher attainers and of those pupils who find writing tasks difficult. Textbooks are in need of replacement. There is still no provision for religious education in the sixth form but there are plans to rectify this omission in the near future. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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 year 2000.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	2	0	47	0	6	n/a	n/a
Music	2	0	30	100	87	n/a	n/a

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	16	94	89	56	45	6.63	5.99
Physics	3	100	88	33	41	4.67	5.72
Business	1	100	91	0	30	4.00	5.34
Information and communication technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Art	14	100	96	71	45	8.14	6.42
History	10	90	89	0	34	4.20	5.43
English	19	95	92	37	31	5.58	5.38

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
Travel and Tourism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and physics, but statistics, chemistry and geology were also sampled. The teaching seen in statistics was good and students made good progress in developing an understanding of the topic. A-level results are not as good as those in mathematics, but students tend to have weaker mathematical backgrounds on entry to the course.

A-level results in geology have been in line or above national averages for the last three years. Teaching in the Year 12 lesson observed was good and resulted in students successfully classifying and identifying rock samples

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The standard of work that students produce is above national averages, as are examination results.
- Students build successfully on their previous work; most students achieve well.
- Students enjoy mathematics and work hard.
- There is good teaching, based on secure subject knowledge.
- There are good relationships between students, and between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- The consistency of written assessment of homework needs improvement.
- The A-level curriculum is not appropriate for some lower attaining students.

210. The inspection covered the AS and A2 mathematics courses offered by the school. The modular course covers pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In the week of the inspection, most lessons were on statistics. In addition a lesson in the AS/A2 statistics course was also seen. As in the main school, the management of an experienced, specialist team of teachers is good. There were no post-16 issues raised in the previous inspection report.

211. In 2000 students gained results that were above national averages: in 1999 and 1998, the results were well above. In 2001, for the second year running, one student was in the top five in the country for a particular examining board. Also in 2001, all A-level students gained a pass grade. In the first year of the new AS examinations, over four-fifths of students gained an AS level pass. The department's 'value added' data analysis, including externally provided analysis, shows that most students make good progress through Years 12 and 13. The AS/A-level statistics results are not as good; however, more of the weaker students take this course than mathematics. There was no difference seen in attainment by gender; analysis of trends in attainment is difficult as the numbers following the courses fluctuate from year to year.

212. Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of mathematical skills and knowledge. The department has produced a useful induction booklet for Year 12 students to enable them to identify their areas of weakness. It also provides plenty of practice examples so they can improve. Some of the students with a weaker mathematical background find it hard to deal with the transition to A-level mathematics. Although these students work hard, and teachers give them good support, AS/A2 course choices, either mathematics or statistics, are not appropriate for some of them. The

2001 AS results also indicated this.

213. Higher attaining students begin A-level work with an existing strong foundation in mathematics. They are able to build quickly on this, acquiring very good technical skills, and developing a high level of critical thinking. These students are able to assimilate new ideas well and apply them to new and more complex situations. Exemplified by Year 13 students' sophisticated use of calculus, they reach high standards in their work. Average attaining students make steady progress, extending their knowledge and skills and developing confidence in their ability to use these in more testing questions. They reach standards that are a little above national averages. Lower attainers, with considerable individual support from teachers, can apply their knowledge and skills to standard situations. They have more difficulty in interpreting problems stated in a slightly different way to the ones they are used to. Most of these students achieve a pass grade, but some do not.
214. Teaching is good. It is based on very good knowledge of mathematics, and course requirements, and an understanding of how to help students to learn. Key points are illustrated in a way that will help students to remember them. In a lesson on correlation, the teacher chose to use the correlation between the number of ducks on a pond and the number of people shopping in a certain store, to point out that variables under investigation have to have a realistic connection. Another strength of teaching is that the pace and challenge of lessons is brisk; this is coupled with good individual support for those who may be finding parts difficult. For example, by the end of a Year 13 lesson on statistics, all students were able to successfully use formulae associated with calculating the expectation of a random variable. Higher attainers are encouraged to approach questions in a more abstract way, lower attainers to learn a methodical structured approach to solution. Students spoke warmly of the amount of time teachers gave to helping them with their work, both in and out of the classroom.
215. Students' own learning skills are good; they work hard and tackle difficult problems by discussing possible methods of solution with each other. This high level of debate, and their willingness to participate in these discussions even if they are unsure of the answer, is a key to their good learning. Targeted questions from the teacher help students to use their time productively, focusing on the essential issues.
216. The high level of oral feedback, on both homework and classwork, is effective in helping students to identify where they need to do more work. Tests are well marked, in line with external assessment criteria. However, there is some difference in teachers' practice in the written marking of homework. The small number of students, three this year, who want to improve their GCSE mathematics grade, are provided with past papers to work through. There are agreed plans to provide a GCSE re-sit course next year, by co-operation between several local post-16 institutions.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching raises standards so students learn well. They are really challenged by teachers with very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Good opportunities are provided for students to experience physics in action in a local hospital and university.
- Teachers are very effectively compensating for aspects of underachievement in the students' previous experience.

Areas for improvement

- Comments on students' notes done in preparation for formal assessments do not clearly indicate what should be done next to gain more marks.
- Assessment guidelines used by teachers and students can be made more specific and therefore easier to use by the students as they assess their own progress.
- The pace of the presentation does occasionally leave some students behind.

217. Physics is attracting more students, including girls, each year. Currently, there are over twenty students in each year group. Analysis of current results indicates above average attainment. The GCE A-level results in 2000 showed that the students' success rate, that is the percentage of grades A to E, was high compared with other schools nationally, but the average point score was below average. The number of students involved was small.
218. Standards of Year 12 students are average. The students use specialist terms such as photons and Planck's constant with some confidence. When very effectively prompted by the teacher they apply concepts from both physics and chemistry when designing computer simulations to permit an investigation of the pulses of energy given off by excited atoms. Students are very well aware of the value of the computer when faced with the need to search for patterns in vast amounts of data, because their teacher has very good knowledge of computers. However, they have had limited experience with data logging and data analysis lower down the school and, therefore, do not answer effectively when they are asked to evaluate the quality of data they have obtained and the procedures they have used.
219. Students in Year 13 design their own investigations, and work with a higher degree of independence on computer simulations. They also are successful in competitive presentations about the physics principles underlying common pieces of equipment to different audiences of physicists and others. They can diagnose the likely causes of hearing deficiency by looking carefully at graphs obtained during medical diagnosis. Students have yet to develop rapid reading techniques to use, for example, when justifying their investigation design choices and when referring to the data and methods used by others.
220. The teaching is good and sometimes excellent. All students are effectively included when the teacher begins with relatively easy concepts and questions and then gradually makes these more demanding as students' confidence is seen to grow. Such is the respect which teachers win that students tend to be a little over dependent upon them: they instinctively turn to the teacher for help. However, the students gain much from these interactions especially as the teachers very effectively use analogies to get the students thinking. Resources of good quality are produced but the range available at a given time is too narrow and this means that progress slows down if the teacher is not immediately available. Exemplary teaching was characterised by enthusiasm, humour, mutual respect and the shared acceptance

that physics principles underpin medical and technical procedures essential in our modern world. Not surprisingly, students concentrate hard and do their best to succeed.

221. Students' longer-term persistence over the two years is a direct result of very effective leadership and management of the sixth form and of physics. The two specialist teachers co-operate and complement each other very well, providing very good support across the range of techniques such as answering written questions, using spreadsheets, doing calculations and investigating relationships between variables in a formula. In return the students enjoy their work and become steadily more confident and more independent as learners. Subject development is driven by enthusiastic specialists who teach well, evaluate their teaching effectively and share a good vision not only of the subject's continuing development in the whole curriculum but also of its role in commerce and the community.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was sampled in the sixth form. In 2000 students gained above average results in A-level design and technology and average results in A-level home economics. In response to student request and syllabus changes current courses are different. Teaching was good in the two lessons observed and led to students gaining a good understanding of product design, development and manufacture. No other subject was sampled or inspected.

BUSINESS

Business was the focus; no other subjects were inspected or sampled

Business

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is helping students to learn effectively.
- The initiative of the teacher in charge of business education to create the conditions for good teaching and learning in difficult circumstances.

Areas for improvement

- In order to maintain standards, stronger and more consistent support needs to be given to this curriculum area by the school's senior management team.
- Some of the present accommodation is unsuitable and is adversely affecting standards.
- Students should have access to a wider range of textbooks and the reliability of the ICT system should be improved. Both these resourcing issues are adversely affecting teaching and learning.

222. A-level business studies is a new course in the school and no results will be available until the summer of 2002. Six candidates sat AS level business studies this year. Though no national comparative data is as yet available, the results suggest above average performance with three grades A and no grade lower than D was awarded.
223. There is a marked difference in the standards being achieved by present students. Standards of attainment in Year 12 are below average. This is a large group, including some disenchanted boys who reduce overall standards. In contrast, some girls are working very hard and are achieving well. Standards in Year 12 are directly related to the endeavour and effort that each student makes. Standards in Year 13 are above average. The students are confident and they have all developed a good basic understanding of business. They use relevant terms appropriately and their analytical

skills are developing rapidly. For example, in case study work on a major company, the students were able to apply ideas about total quality management and management styles to the firm. These concepts were used in the correct context with the students being able to forecast possible outcomes. Their work shows that they have continued to make progress after their AS level achievements.

224. The quality of teaching is good and fosters good learning, though teaching is more confident and challenging in Year 13. Learning in Year 12 is constrained by the attitude of some male students. They tend to trivialise the information presented and they are not good at applying the theories presented, or analysing outcomes. Their written work is unsatisfactory, as they are unable to write analytically. The teaching of this group is also made harder by the poor accommodation. The room is small and cramped and the teacher cannot readily employ different strategies that would allow some of the negative attitudes to be challenged. In Year 13, learning is good because of the quality of planning and the strategies that are used. Accommodation is significantly better and the group is smaller. Challenging tasks can be set that encourage independent working and the students use the Internet and other sources well to undertake research. However, some problems are still encountered and these adversely affect learning. The range of textbooks available is unsatisfactory and the ICT system is unreliable. During one lesson the system was faulty and the quality and pace of the lesson suffered. Nevertheless, good work was achieved and the students showed good subject knowledge and the ability to apply their knowledge of different types of management structures to various business situations. The standards achieved are helped by the students' high levels of competency in the use of ICT. All students were preparing good quality presentations using PowerPoint.
225. The management of business studies is satisfactory. The member of staff responsible for this subject is comparatively inexperienced and was placed in a difficult situation, especially last year, when there was no direct line manager. Pleasing results have been achieved. The department is unsatisfactorily provided for in terms of textbooks and, though numbers are rising, finances have been cut significantly. Some of the teaching accommodation is poor. The ICT equipment is unreliable and this leads to frustration for both the teacher and the students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There was a focus on ICT, no other subject was inspected or sampled.

Information technology

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

Strengths

- There is very good teaching of the subject.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- The teachers' understanding of the examination requirements is very good.
- There is very good management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is no provision of a dedicated teaching room for small groups of students.
- The availability of computers for sixth form students for private study is unsatisfactory.
- The range of courses is limited.
- The retention of students from AS to A2 courses is poor.

226. Above average numbers gained higher grades in the AS examinations in 2001.
227. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average in AS and A2 courses. Students taking the AS course have a good grasp on using PowerPoint. Higher

attaining students show more imaginative use in preparing their presentations, with a good awareness of target audience. Average and lower attaining students make more use of text based information. Students have already completed one unit to produce a flier for the European Computer Driving Licence making good use of a range of fonts, lay out and colour, and understand the importance of text-heavy documents. Many students are working below expected levels in using spreadsheets, as they have not been taught this previously in the school.

228. A2 students have completed one major unit of work in the production of a booklet for web site design. Students have made extensive use of clip art, downloads from the Internet and a wide range of font styles to create attractive and informative booklets. They have researched print styles, paper quality and binding materials such as spiral binding to produce very professional booklets in a range of sizes. Using the skills and knowledge gained in this part of the course, students are at present working on a unit about printing and presentation, and researching most effective methods for this. Students are beginning to learn key aspects about quality of text and printing. They understand the issues about economics of different print runs and quality.
229. Teaching is very good. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge gives students the essential information to make very good progress. A good, purposeful working atmosphere pervades lessons in which the students are mature, responsible and produce good work rates. On-going assessment of students' work and the opportunity for the teacher to work one-to-one enable students to make significant progress. Lessons are very well prepared and match the requirements of the examination syllabuses. Assessment of students' project work is well done and the valuable comments made have a significant effect on helping students make very good progress. Teachers create opportunities for higher attaining students to extend their interests by providing more extensive bibliographies on specific topics.
230. Students are making very good progress in the subject, using computers and the Internet effectively. The students' achievements are all the more remarkable as they have not had ICT lessons since Year 7.
231. Students work well in lessons. They show interest and involvement. They are responsive in question and answer sessions. The quality of their project work is very good showing that they have spent some time in producing their best work. Students are mature and can work with minimum help from the teacher.
232. The department is very well managed and documented. Teaching is monitored and good practice is shared. Examination results are effectively analysed and students are set appropriate targets to reach.
233. Higher attaining students are well provided for with AS and A2 ICT courses and an element in the key skills programme complements the provision. An absence of dedicated equipped rooms for smaller sixth form groups undermines achievement for some students.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Travel and tourism and physical education were inspected; no other subject was sampled.

Travel and Tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in travel and tourism is **good**.

Strengths

- The provision of this course is a good collaborative venture between the school and a further education college.
- The students understand the thorough assessment procedures that give clear advice about how to improve their work.
- The provision of this vocational course is successful in improving the career and educational opportunities available to students.

Areas for improvement

- School students do not have the same access to fieldwork as their college colleagues.

234. This is a new, two-year advanced vocational course being offered through a collaborative venture with an adjacent further education college. Members of the college staff provide all the tuition. No comparative examination data is available.

235. The standards being achieved by the Year 12 students following this course are in line with national expectations. All students are developing their understanding of various aspects of the travel and tourism industry well. They are able to distinguish between different markets such as leisure and business travellers, inbound and outbound tourism and niche markets. They are also beginning to develop satisfactorily their understanding of the political, economic, social and technological factors that influence both the level of travel and the popularity of different venues. Research skills are being satisfactorily improved through the use of trade journals and the Internet but, when using the latter, the students are not selective enough in their presentations; insufficient evaluation of the information gained is made. At present, their analysis is factual rather than analytical.

236. The quality of teaching is good and fosters good learning. A good feature of the teaching seen is that the teacher has considerable personal experience and knowledge of the travel industry. This knowledge helped learning as a clear explanation of the deregulation policies of the United States government in the 1970s and early 1980s was given. The impact of such policies on the present day market in airline travel was explained, with the students being challenged to think about airlines and destinations that would have benefited. Though the students were unable instantly to provide convincing answers, they were encouraged to research answers for themselves. Such a challenging task succeeded in placing very good learning opportunities in the correct vocational context.

237. The management of this collaborative venture is good. There is a clear understanding between the two institutions about responsibilities and there are very good procedures for ensuring that student attendance is monitored and that potential problems are identified at an early stage. The college has the advantage of a long tradition in the provision of vocational courses and this is amply reflected in the very good assessment procedures established. The students know about these procedures and they understand just what they must do to meet the various grading targets. The provision of this course represents a very good use of educational resources. Moreover, the staff in both institutions appreciates the need to review and evaluate the course regularly. Arrangements so far have not allowed school students to participate in field courses. This undermines standards.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Students are interested in and have a positive attitude towards physical education.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching lacks enough pace in some lessons.
- There are too few opportunities for students in Year 13 to take physical education.

238. With no previous history of A-level courses, the take up of AS level in 2000 was low. Only two students completed the course, both obtaining a grade A in the 2001 examinations. However, neither student chose to start an A2 course this year.
239. Standards of work seen during the inspection in AS level are average. Students understand planes of movement and are able to relate these to specific sports. All students in the group have a satisfactory understanding of racism in sport and the higher attainers can give in-depth descriptions of it, with a variety of examples. In badminton there is a range of attainment; over half the group is at the standard expected, although some students are below this. Average attaining students have a satisfactory range of shots and have good variation and control in service. Lower attaining students do not make good shot selection and do not understand finer points of the game. All students are learning more about the evaluation of practical performances and are able to pick out the strengths and weaknesses of other students.
240. Students are making satisfactory progress in the subject, as they increase their knowledge and understanding, building on their GCSE work. There is good progress in their understanding of more complex anatomy and physiology required by the AS syllabus. Students have increased their understanding of different classes of levers and can relate this to movement and sporting activities as well as muscular action involved. In badminton there is satisfactory progress as students increase their knowledge and understanding of the game, although the performance skills of some are below examination requirements.
241. Students are responsive in question and answer sessions and take pride in their work. Higher attaining students have better-organised course work folders. All students are active in practical lessons working with interest and enthusiasm.
242. Teaching is satisfactory, and sometimes it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations, which helps the students' understanding of the subject. Teaching is better where students have the opportunity to be active in their learning. Students make better progress when challenged to think, respond in question and answer sessions, research their work and relate answers to their own sport. Less learning takes place when the pace of lessons is set by the speed of dictation of notes, which students could prepare themselves from their own text books.
243. The department has made good progress in introducing advanced courses, with good management of staff, accommodation and resources. The curriculum is well planned and meets the requirements of the examination syllabus. In addition to AS level, which is available to Year 12 students; all students in this year have a compulsory physical education lesson each week. Extensive use is made of the sports centre to provide students with a good choice of activities. Not all students in Year 13 are able to avail themselves of opportunities to join physical education lessons. The department has a commitment to providing for higher attaining students through school teams, with a strong fixture list against other schools in rugby, hockey and cricket.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This curriculum area was not inspected.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art was the main focus of the inspection. Lessons in drama and media studies were also sampled and reference to these is made below.

Art

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

Strengths

- There are good levels of independent learning.
- Standards are improving.
- Good relationships improve learning.

Areas for improvement

- The standard of drawing in research and the development of ideas should be better.
- The timetable does not meet the needs of students effectively.
- Accommodation and storage facilities for ongoing work are unsatisfactory.

244. Over the last four years, A-level art results have also varied. In some years very few obtain the higher grades A and B and in other years, for example 2000, eight out of the fourteen candidates gained grade A. This means that over time results have been average. In 2001, two-thirds of the students gained the higher grades A and B at AS Level. No national data is yet available to relate these results to national averages. Over time, female students do better than their male counterparts but fewer male students do art. This makes valid comparisons difficult.

245. The evidence from lessons and students' folders shows standards being maintained. Standards in Year 13 are above average, particularly in the ability of students to exploit and develop different combinations of media in their work. For example, one student combined paint effects and surface textures well when working on a theme of seven deadly sins. Standards are above average when using a similar approach to sketchbook work. For example, one student, inspired by a visit to Australia, used the work of Aborigines as a starting point, producing a rich collection of images and an exciting range of textural effects. The use of drawing as a basic language of research and investigation is less well developed and standards are average. The work of students who have just started the AS level course in Year 12 is average. They too combine media well as they produce collage and textural work based on a theme of buildings, but the basic language of drawing as means of researching imagery is not as good as it should be. The standard of the personal study aspect of the course is average. Students research a wide range of subjects, and produce written work of a satisfactory standard. The best work in this aspect of the course is well presented with a good balance between the written and visual content. All show an ability to draw conclusions about the work they study, to speculate intelligently about the intentions of artists and, on some occasions, make appropriate connections with their own work. In discussion, students show an equal facility, speaking confidently about their work and where ideas have originated and how they might be developed. Year 12 students, having only just started their personal study course, are making satisfactory progress.

246. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have structured the course well, which

reflects care and thought in planning. The course is underpinned by an appropriate methodology, which gives due weight to visual research and the development of ideas. The effect of this is that students have a good understanding of what they are expected to do. In Year 13, the teacher acts as advisor and technical instructor. Students have confidence in the good knowledge and understanding of their teachers, seeking advice on both initial ideas and on how they might approach their work. The effect of this is that students are encouraged to show a good deal of independence, which coupled with their own high level of motivation results in above average attainment. There are two separate teaching groups in Year 12 - one being very much smaller than the other. Students in this small group are less well motivated but good teaching stimulated them effectively as they learned for the first time how to use oil paint.

247. The management of the A-level course is satisfactory and the syllabus has been translated into an appropriate course. Teaching is shared across the department but the distribution of teaching does not serve the best interest of all students. For example, a single lesson in Year 12 devoted to the teaching of the personal study aspect of the course is not as effective as it should be because this is the only lesson taught by this teacher to this group. This means that the intimate connection that can so frequently be made between the examples of art studied, and the work of students, is not fully realised. In addition to this, because of whole school timetable constraints, all the Year 12 students cannot be taught together. The resultant much smaller teaching group fails to develop an effective group dynamic. Accommodation is also a constraint. Year 13, in particular, work in a very small room where it is not possible to leave work out and storage facilities for on-going work are poor.
248. At the time of the previous inspection, standards at A-level were below average, since then standards have improved and are now average.

Media Studies

249. Courses in media studies are offered at AS and A-levels. Twenty-one students began the course last year and gained good results in examinations. Eighteen are continuing to A-level and will be the first candidates at this level. Samples of written work were inspected and one Year 13 lesson was observed. Students worked confidently in identifying characteristic features of a film poster and were able to discuss their effectiveness with confidence and perception. Teaching is well informed and characterised by skilful questioning that encourages students to explore ideas and reach personal conclusions. Written work reveals suitable skill in organising material to provide clear, relevant answers to set questions. A very good account of the development of 'film noir' was well researched and written in a mature style with ideas clearly supported by examples.

Drama

250. The subject is well established within the A-level curriculum. Six students were examined last year and all were successful. One lesson was observed. This was characterised by very good teaching and learning, students' mature attitudes to their work and good standards of attainment. Very good relationships between students and the teacher helped to develop confidence and acceptance of personal responsibility for learning. The lesson was spent in detailed discussion of how a devised performance could be most effectively presented. Students demonstrated good knowledge of acting styles and dramatic devices. The level of debate was often vigorous but also purposeful. Teaching was appropriately non-directive, but posed a series of very challenging questions to which students responded positively.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected fully and geography and psychology were also sampled. One, well-taught, AS geography lesson was observed in Year 12. The teacher's high expectations resulted in students successfully composing a commentary for a video of coastal processes, using appropriate technical vocabulary. In geography, there are currently no students in Year 13. In 2000, the A-level results were in line with the national average and showed a marked improvement in 2001. Planning for A-level psychology is thorough and links closely to course requirements, including provision for key skills.

History

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement is high with the most recent A and AS level results potentially well above average.
- The quality of teaching, coupled with the very good subject knowledge of the teachers, ensures students are challenged to read widely and think deeply in making their judgements.
- The marking of students' written work is of a high quality; teachers give students helpful guidance on how to improve their work.
- Leadership and management are very effective: a very strong teaching team helps students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not integrated thoroughly enough into the teaching.
- Assessment data are not used to evaluate results in relation to other subjects and to national benchmarks.

251. Students' performance in A-level examinations from 1998 to 2001 has steadily improved, albeit with relatively small numbers. With all students passing at the higher A/B grades, the results for 2001 are likely to be well above the national average. Similarly results at AS level in 2001 are well above the likely average.
252. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that students' levels of achievement are high. This is mainly because of good teaching, which emphasises the acquisition of important literacy and research skills. In making presentations to their peers, Year 12 students, working from a background of good, supportive reading, engage enthusiastically in debating historical judgements on Henry VII. Understanding, based on reading in depth, was also a feature of a Year 13 lesson in which students, through discussion and asking perceptive questions of the teacher, extended their knowledge of the consequences of Mary I's policies and actions. In this way they consolidated their knowledge and began to shape their ideas in relation to a specimen examination question.
253. Consequently, in half of the lessons observed, students' learning was very good. Their enquiry work, often using sources found on the Internet, aptly supported both their written work and the high level of discussion in which they engaged in lessons. They apply themselves well to class activities and engage in the wider reading that enables them to be aware of differing historical opinion. They present arguments well and handle questions from peers and teachers effectively, which is good for their personal as well as their historical development. They have chosen history for a variety of motives, but none regrets doing so. They enjoy history and find the work challenging.

254. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have established very warm relationships with each of the students, and treat them as responsible adults. They respond well to that and the high level of historical knowledge of their teachers, which stimulates discussion and drives high achievement through demanding, developmental questions. In a Year 12 lesson, studying the use of cartoons for propaganda purposes, the teacher's expertise in history drew information from students during a demonstration analysis of Soviet cartoons on the subject of the 'Five Year Plan' and their evaluation of that information. Because of this, the students sharpened their own analytical skills and, at the same time, built up the confidence to present their own evaluation in pairs to their peers. They did this very well and again with developmental questions the teacher extended the scope and level of their analytical skills. Teachers' marking of students' written work and the associated debriefing are equally good. Assignments are challenging and expectations are realistically high and based on the careful assessment of each student's work.
255. The department is very well managed. Although only recently appointed, the head of the department has a clear vision of the way ahead for history. Her leadership is dynamic and effective changes have already been made. The history reference section in the library has been upgraded and students report that they find it helpful in supporting their studies. History students at the time of the previous report were "never taken on fieldwork trips". Now they are offered opportunities to attend historical conferences and visit the First World War battlefields. Additionally, visiting speakers give addresses on important topics, such as the Holocaust, and talk to students both formally and informally. The use of ICT is not built sufficiently into teaching. Although assessment procedures have improved considerably since the previous inspection, the data obtained needs to be used to evaluate results in relation to other subjects and to national benchmarks. A mix of new and experienced teachers has become a strong, coherent whole whose individual members work well together and share ownership of a successful department that has worked hard and improved its results since the previous inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English, which includes courses to AS and A-levels in English and English language, was the focus of the inspection, German was also sampled. The quality of teaching in German is good but the take-up of the subject is small. No students have currently chosen to study French.

English

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

Strengths

- There is a good choice of courses to AS and A-levels. Provision is also made to support students retaking GCSE.
- Good teaching and learning are helping to improve achievement.
- Students benefit from good levels of guidance.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the intellectual challenge of some aspects of the course in English language.

256. Results at A-level match national averages and exceed them for the proportion of students gaining grades A/B. In AS examinations in 2001 students gained results which matched and sometimes exceeded expectation based upon their earlier attainment. The proportion of students continuing to complete two-year courses is

high.

257. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average. Since starting their courses, students in Year 12 have begun to adjust to the demands of study at this level. Students make effective use of both electronic and printed text for research purposes and are confident in reporting their findings and judgements to classmates. The quality of relationships between students and with teachers is positive and supportive so students are encouraged to explore ideas and offer contributions. Written work, completed towards the end of Year 12 and at the start of Year 13, shows a mature grasp of material, ability to organise it effectively and a confident expression of personal opinion rather than the repetition of accepted interpretations. Students in Year 13 are fluent and confident in discussion and well able to use technical language appropriate to the tasks set. They understand the importance of supporting their opinions by reference to evidence so that they speak and write with authority.
258. Positive attitudes and behaviour reflect high levels of motivation. Year 12 students who have difficulty with time management are given advice and firm warnings about the consequences of failing to keep to schedule. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. They sustain good levels of concentration and persevere to gain understanding of often difficult ideas.
259. Teaching is good. Some is very good. It falls below this quality, but without becoming unsatisfactory, when tasks are not clearly explained or when the pace of lessons becomes leisurely. Teachers have good subject knowledge, as was demonstrated in a very good lesson on Shakespeare's sonnets with Year 13. In this lesson, students were encouraged to widen and deepen their thinking by answering very challenging questions based upon the teacher's very good mastery of these complex poems. In all lessons, students are expected to contribute actively to their learning. The quality of their response helps them to develop real independence and maturity as learners.
260. Students learn well so that they gain examination results that at least match expectation based upon earlier assessments of their attainment. Particular strengths are their ability to draw upon relevant material and to present opinions clearly supported by appropriate evidence. Students develop good research skills, including very good use of the Internet, with no evidence of plagiarism. Year 12 Language students are developing an appropriate interest in the origins and varieties of English. Uncertainties about differences between regional dialects and slang, although perhaps acceptable at this early stage of the course, should be clarified as a matter of urgency.
261. Students have been well prepared for the styles of teaching and learning and the obligation to accept responsibility encountered in the sixth form by their experiences in earlier years. This results from the clear vision of the head of department, which is now shared by all members of the department. Sixth form courses are well managed and well resourced. The school's librarians are knowledgeable and highly supportive. All those teaching at this level are experienced teachers and enjoy the challenge of their work.